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Will Eisner

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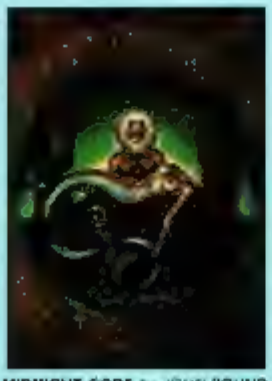

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DOSSIER

Jill Kroesen: naive ennui, or world-weary girlishness?
Photo by Jeff Niki

Ron Kuivila makes noise.
Photo by Paula Court

NUVINYL: AVANT-GUARDIAN ANGELS

For some odd reason, this past year's normally safe-for-hibernation midwinter musical maneuvers were platooned with troops seductively garbed in snappy "avant-garde"and/or "new music" uniforms. No cause for alarm, boys and girls—just the scheduling confluence of the **Brooklyn Philharmonic's Meet the Moderns** program, the **Lovely Music Festival**, and the **Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave** series. Kinda like a jamboree for sonically retentive Boy Scouts.

And just in time, too. Numb and weary from an excessive diet of clubbed-brain dance music, your aging correspondent needed scant urging to don the old Bwana Lou pith helmet and head out in search of aesthetic enlightenment (or "raw material," as forgotten twentieth century avant-gardist Brian Eno called it).

However, actually identifying what currently passes muster as avant-garde is something of a problem—like trying to spell out the complete works of Mickey Spillane in Alpha-Bits (the damn things just keep floating away from the spots you've martialed them into, confounding any neat arrangement). Used to be avanters were daring extremists, mucking righteously about in places no self-respecting (and self-supporting) artiste would dare tread. In simpler times, they even considerately gathered themselves into clearly-labeled movements, or—best of all—wrote helpful manifestos telling us scalp-scratchers what it was all about.

But, no more Mr. Nice Guys. Not only have we groundlings been left to invent our own movements and labeling-lingo, they've even made it impossible for us to recognize a bonafide avant-gardism even after listening to it!

If nothing else, the aforementioned three programs proved that, certainly: today's avant-garde wears some pretty tricky post-modern disguises; and probably: the whole concept of the avant-garde as the mega-movement of doctrinaire opposition no longer has any cultural relevance. The polarity of artistic allegiance has seemingly reversed itself: not only have the fruits of last season's rebellion grown stale, but the very idea of rebellion itself seems quaint and antiquated. Fact is, the symbols of rebellion have been stylized into the mainstream (which exists now as a fragmented monolith), while crafty assimilation of mainstream styles has become the essence of radicalism. Is it the *power* to shock that we've lost, the ability to feel it, or just the willingness to try it for *real*?

Take January twenty-ninth's **Meet the Moderns** performance at the Brooklyn Academy of Music; part of modernist cheerleader/conductor Lukas Foss's ongoing series presenting little-known "new music" to the traditional classical audience. Illustrated here was the big post-modernist dilemma: avant-gardism transformed into a tradition of accepted deviancy modes, which—you guessed it—is (or *should* be) an oxymoronic contradiction. The pieces filling the bulk of the show, by such unknown (to me) composers as Joji Yuasa, Arthur Paxton, Toru Takemitsu, and Randolph Coleman were devoid of any real sense of risk, adventure, daring, excitement, or naughty aberration. It was all so goddamn safe—until the finale (and only reason I had come), singer **Diamanda Galas**'s "Panoptikon," which viciously samurized the eardrums of every snoozing modern-meister in the crowd. Galas is by *no* definition a traditionalist (November '82 *HM* "Dossier"), and her howling-succubus-in-heat vocalizing is the *shit-scariest* sound you've ever heard (short of a buzzing chain saw swinging wildly behind you in the night). It was as though she was reaching down elbow-deep into her throat to uproot bloody handfuls of emotion and then throwing them triumphantly to the floor—a riveting, utterly transcendent display that blew me higher than any drug I've ever taken, quickly and ruthlessly smothered by the orchestra's trivialized encore of Eubie Blake's "Charleston Rag" (like following a Tobe Hooper movie with a Huckleberry Hound cartoon), thus insuring the crowd exited smiling instead of twitching paranoiacally (obviously, Lou prefers the latter). I find this lack of courage—the reluctance to really *disturb*, so typical of the classical aesthetic—to be an appalling commentary on the state of modern music.

I expected much the same from the **Lovely Music Festival**, and prepared myself for a dozen evenings of politely deviant modern chamber music. It turned out to be a bit of that, but thankfully, also far more. Lovely Music functions as the OK Corral of the downtown art-music scene—record label, management company, booking agent, and sheep dog for a herd of hopelessly unclassifiable musicians—and this was their county fair and rodeo.

The month-long showcase kicked off with **Robert Ashley**'s "television opera" *Atalanta: Acts of God* (written about by Merle Ginsberg in the June *HM* "Dossier"), a verbal barrage that was fascinating for its first half hour, interesting for the second, and excruciatingly dull for the third. This profligacy of length is a common problem in new music. Brief, concise statements seem to have gone out of fashion, and many potentially enjoyable works were ruined for me by artist/performers carrying on long past the exhaustion of their ideas. Thus marred were festival presentations by **David Van Tieghem** (another installment in his semi-spontaneous, solo percussion performance, *A Man and his Toys*: sometimes brilliant, often hilarious, but ultimately wearying at ninety minutes), **"Blue" Gene Tyranny** (showering piano and synth improvs, tape collages, and video bits enlivened by flashes of wit, deadened by repetition), **Peter Gordon** ("Frozen Moments of Passion," a voice/sax/tape work that probably comes off better on radio, as originally intended; "Return of the Native," a lovely composition for string-augmented big bands that circled endlessly back on itself; and "Casino," an uninspired jazz-riff relay race), and **Rhys Chatham** (whose minimally varying pieces for loudly strummed guitars have become—after four years—not a little lacking in rewards).

Highlights were **Ron Kuivila** (similar to Van Tieghem, except with electrical erector-set toys; exhilarating, ear-splitting electronic noise, lightened with tangerine Dream-like whirling and Mr. Machine-ish playfulness), **Jill Kroesen** (smart, witty, quasi-cabaret songs balancing bluesy relationship-fatigue with girlish naivete; extremely personal, sometimes too much so), and **Ned Sublette** (post-modern cowboy music that simultaneously exults in, pokes fun at, and stretches the boundaries of trashy genre conventions; Sublette is also the foremost proponent of the radio as a live rock'n'roll instrument).

Another big post-modernist dilemma presented itself during the course of the festival: while I suppose all "serious artists" (ahem!) should have the opportunity to mount perform-

ances equal to, or at least approaching, their vision (hence the grant and subsidy system), public acceptance and support are frequently the only barometers we have to gauge whether these guys are just wanking in their hats or not. Ergo, does the sparse attendance at some of these shows indicate these artist/performers are producing elitist and/or irrelevant work unworthy of support? No, not really; but does awarding someone enough money/time/facilities to realize the full extent of their vision mean that the work produced is worthwhile and should be regarded seriously? No again. Can anybody straighten this out?

And, from a scribbled bit in Lou's notebook: musicians performing with TV sets (as fully half the shows had). Disturbing bourgeois cultural trend, or welcome visual relief?

Subwaying back out to the Brooklyn Academy of Music brings us to BAM's annual Next Wave series, and the contributions of Glenn Branca and Laurie Anderson—two artists undergoing serious evaluation in my head (and we all know how painful that can be). I took an instant liking to both their (totally different) work when I first encountered it three years ago (a time when lots of things seemed fresh and exciting), and have grown less enthusiastic as they've expanded the scope of their logistic ambition (and their audience), without appreciably advancing their ideas. Branca's shtick at least still moves me; Anderson's I find almost insufferable—a sort of superficially coy, high-art-hairline/low-brow-forehead Las Vegas lounge act for the upwardly mobile and inwardly vacuous. The warmth, intimacy, spontaneity, vulnerability, and refreshing synthesis of media symbology that once attracted me has given way to a self-important redundancy and tedious self-parody. Sad.

I suspect the mid-January premiere of **Glenn Branca**'s Symphony No. 3, *Gloria* (gimme a break, Glenn) marked an important turning point for him. Like many other popular-art practitioners (sf and pulp-mystery writers, for instance) Branca yearns desperately for something he thinks the straight music world can give him (respectability? grants? authority-figure acceptance?), so he clothes his rock-derived, rumble-from-the-gutter in a pompous, ill-fitting, classical-drag monkey-suit.* Obviously, premiering at this venerable old mausoleum was something he lusted after, but stopping to consider the music before anything else, it can only be judged a mistake. Older halls built for traditional unamplified instruments just can't acoustically handle *loud* music—the resulting sound is most often a sludgy mess that serves no one's purposes. Thus was the opening night's performance marred (I understand later ones were improved), and while the piece erected a standing wave of powerful, beautiful, harmonic ringing (a G.B. trademark) the resulting ponderous thunder suggested nothing so much as a wheezing Brontosaurus staggering to the graveyard. Branca's music has no real melody or rhythm to shape or carry it (a drummer accents and punctuates the sound curtain), but more importantly, no sustained, compelling reason to sit through the hour-or-so of Branca's Bernstein-like melodramatic coaxing of his symphony's several ejaculative climaxes. Transcendence is Branca's recurring theme, but like someone straining desperately for orgasm, he muffs it by trying too hard.

Glenn Branca looks for his monkey suit.

Photo by Deborah Feingold

The conceits of **Laurie Anderson**'s presentation the following month of her complete *United States*, Parts I-IV, were far worse. Clocking in at a lethal five hours (over two successive nights), Anderson's magnum-opus dissection of the American state of mind had about as much wit and insight as a good half-hour "M*A*S*H" episode—nothing revolutionary, but about thirty minutes (with commercials) of oddly affecting irreverence and poignancy. Anderson synthesizes elements drawn from the work of the past twenty-five years' multi-media avant-garde—Meredith Monk's naive lyricism, Robert Ashley's dry irony, and John Cage's absurd Zen fables—but I can't say she's done a hell of a lot new with them. The odor of *contrivance* hangs over everything she does, while she's busily affecting an air of intimacy. She adopts a colloquial/conversational mode of speaking, but removes all inflection and never breaks her annoyingly cutesy shtick. Like a comedian that never shuts off, she's become trapped by her disingenuously mocking persona. Her studied lack of pretention has itself become a distancing device, a mask to hide behind as fake and as stupid as all the ones she lampoons. The parodist herself has not only become more important than her subject, but more deserving of satirical deflation. After five hours of this I was ready to rush the stage and wring her little neck.

Again, any sense of risk—personal or artistic—was playing hooky. An illustration: at one point in *United States*, Anderson wires her head and taps on it for some interesting sounds—whereas someone like Chris Burden (who ten years ago had himself shot) would've wired himself and then hired a gang of Hell's Angels to come in and beat the shit out of him. Now *there* would've been some interesting sounds! Not that I'm proposing Anderson disfigure herself for her art (on second thought . . .), but there's more essential risk in the quasi-rock music of bands like Swans, Sonic Youth, SPK, Cabaret Voltaire, Einstürzende Neubauten, the Residents, etc., than anything in the supposed new music vanguard. It's time for a semantic reorganization, guys. Resolved: Lou will banish the words "avant-garde" from his already-limited vocabulary when Diamanda Galas joins Michael Jackson for a duet on his next album.

Vinyl Accompaniment

Ben Kulvis/Nicolas Collins, Going Out with Slow Smoke (Lovely). Sublime noise and tape manipulation. Fits right in with my Throbbing Gristle and You've Got Foetus on Your Breath records.

Laurie Anderson: kick her while she's down.

Ned Sublette and the Southwesterners, Western Classics (Lovely). Sublette's anthrosonilogical field trip into the folk roots of country music. The only record picturing someone with a cowboy hat I will allow in my collection.

Jill Kroesen, *Stop Vicious Cycles* (Lovely). Uneven, but contains some great songs (and look out for when Sublette records the ones she's written for him).

New Music from Antarctica, Volume I (Antarctica). Contributions from Kroesen, Sublette, Tyranny, Chatham, Van Tieghem, and Gordon (the high point), all with snazzy accompanying videos by John Sanborn and/or Kit Fitzgerald.

Glenn Branca, *Symphony No. 3* (Neutral). Thick, static wall-of-hum; excerpted from a better Next Wave show than I saw. Also: "Bad Smells," from the Branca/John Giorno Ace-Double LP **Who You Staring At?** (Giorno Poetry Systems). My favorite vinyl Branca. Uptempo, powerchorded gallop whipped with rich harmonic drone; segues into formalist near-funk (Gang of 4 sentenced to Juilliard); segues into close-ordered marching obstacled by guitar droppings.

—Lou Stathis

(Neutral Records: 325 Spring St., NYC, NY 10013. Lovely Music: 325 Spring St., NYC, NY 10013. Antarctica: c/o Lovely Music.)

FLASH! STOP THE PRESSES! HOLD YOUR LOSES!
It's just been announced—as I write this—that the Residents' Mole Show will be opening this year's **New Music America Festival**, being held at the very instant you're reading this—October 7–17—in Washington, DC. Also featured are **Diamanda Galas, David Van Tieghem, Ornette Coleman, Bernie Worrell, Philip Glass, Z'ev, the Inuit Indian Throat Singers**, and too goddamn much more. Whew! What are you doing sitting there on your butt? Get on a plane, chump! At least call (202) 347-4717 for info. —LS

* The thought occurs to me that Branca might be playing a double-reverse here, ironically adopting tightassed trappings to signal his rebellion from the cultivated eccentricity so prevalent in the rock world he seems to be leaving behind. Sometimes, trying to second guess these guys is tough work.

Miles Davis

"Miles Davis's attitudes have presaged every pop posture from beat to punk to new romantic."

Subjective Mile(s)age

As sideman:
Charlie Parker, *The Very Best of Bird* (Warner Bros., 1977). At the birth of bebop (1946-47), Bird's twenty-one year old sidekick hones his less-is-more technique.
As leader:
Collector's Items (Prestige, 1977). From 1951-55, with Parker, Rollins, Mingus, plus a "My Old Flame" that's filled with longing and acceptance.
Kind of Blue (Columbia, 1959). Miles's Zen master album; with the late Bill Evans's crystalline piano.
Circle in the Round (Columbia, 1979). An eclectic overview spanning 1955-70. Best for its hypnotic, labyrinthine title cut.
In A Silent Way (Columbia, 1969). Someone called this one "electric church music." With Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, and Josef Zawinul.
A Tribute to Jack Johnson (Columbia, 1971). Angry rockin' roll music. Side one's a motherfucker, juiced by John McLaughlin's corrosive guitar.
Get Up With It (Columbia, 1974). A weird one. An elegy to Ellington, which rises to heaven, backed with a pit of black noise.

SMILEY MILES

Trumpet player, Zen master, clotheshorse, junkie boxer, macho stud: **Miles Davis** is the ultimate cult hero. And **Eric Nisenson**, a young Jewish New Yorker, has written the ultimate cult hero's biography. *The Great Miles Mystique* holds sway over every page of *'Round About Midnight* (Dial Press), revealing a man of kaleidoscopic identity. A child of the black upper middle class who revolted into style, the Man's attitudes have presaged every pop posture from beat to punk to new romantic. And yes, he's a musical colossus spanning three and a half decades of near-constant creation—from riding shotgun for Charlie Parker during the 1940s birth of bebop, he's gone on to play point man for maybe half a dozen musical movements of his own.

Nisenson recounts the music and musicians, but doesn't pause much to analyze it—which is all right. No matter how much you get into the music, the man himself equals the sound he makes. And you can listen to the records anyway. But from this book and **Ian Carr**'s straighter, less gee-whiz bio, ***Miles Davis*** (Morrow), you can pick up lots of great personal tidbits. (Like the time Miles kicked a four-year heroin jag by checking into a Detroit motel and staring at the ceiling for twelve days, cursing everyone he didn't like. "My pores opened and I smelled like chicken soup.")

Miles is the man David Bowie wishes he could be—someone who can turn on any identity he wants, and still remain utterly himself. He'll always be a cult hero because he's so difficult to know—he's a human jump-cut. Even the sound of his horn is usually disguised: muted, synthesized, wah-wahed, echoed, submerged in a wash of sound, screened by the persona. But as fans, we demand it, we emulate it. Inscrutability is the last refuge for the sensitive soul; Miles is a hero because he can constantly change faces yet still speak from the heart.

And that's where the new album comes in. As you can imagine, my first thoughts on ***Star People*** (Columbia) relate the renewed energy and humor in Miles's playing to his new (fourth? fifth?) wife, actress Cicely Tyson. They seem to have the most perfect of marriages—the Shakespearean ideal between true minds and old friends—and it appears to have freed Miles on the deepest, most personal level. He's found himself in a new way, shaking off the fear of death, recharging his earliest licks and styles, and returning to the blues he played as a St. Louis teenager in the early forties. "Those were some of my best times, you know."

Miles is resting his sarcastic, venom-spitting self for awhile; he's healthy again. And even if his new health costs us (for now at least) the supremely tragic and bereft side of his sound, Miles in 1983 bubbles with vigor, color, warm irony, and good vibes. As far as this cult of personality goes, it's got little to do with Charlie Parker, Ian Curtis, Jesus Christ. This cult hero is alive.

—Stuart Cohn

PEE-WEE POW-WOW

Pee-Wee Herman is no joke, I guess. Herman's the gangly nurd in an ill-fitting gray suit who looks like a cross between Jerry Lewis and Knucklehead Smiff. You've probably seen him on "The David Letterman Show," "Evening at the Improv," and a few likely films and comedy specials—and most certainly he's funny without giving it much further thought or insight. But Herman doesn't succeed because he's a standard comedian; his gift is in presenting an extremely successful piece of media/cultural feedback that can't help but appeal to anyone who grew up in the fifties-sixties-seventies time-space, that era when things like personality lunchboxes, clumsy cartoons, and ultra-bizarre campy toys really came of age. Herman takes these icons of post-war plastic Americana and synthesizes them into one precocious, bratty, embraceable youngster; we all *know* Pee-Wee Herman, we all instantly identify with his wide-eyed spazziness and obsessive fascination with gimmicks and gizmos. Without a lot of exaggeration, satire, or campiness, Pee-Wee personifies the common childhood experiences we all shared, absorbed, and had thought were long forgotten or buried.

And Paul Reubens isn't joking, either. He's the actor who (very seriously) has portrayed Pee-Wee for about four years now. "It falls somewhere between classical stand-up comedy and conceptual something-or-other," explains Reubens, a soft-spoken, slightly punky thirty-year-old who bears little resemblance to the goofy extrovert he's created. Only when Reubens breaks into a wide, childish grin is he identifiable as Pee-Wee. "I'm like a performance artist to a degree, except I know more technically than most performance artists, as far as acting goes. I think there's a certain kind of artiness involved in what I do—that's appealing to me."

Reubens developed his Herman persona while working in a west coast improv group; pretty soon it took on a life of its own, and Pee-Wee Herman became the visible performing face of Paul Reubens. It lead to an LA stage show based on Pee-Wee's life that ran over the summer of 1981, a subsequent HBO special, loads of TV shots, Shelly Duvall's "Pinnochio" for Showtime, and appearances in films ranging from the last two Cheech and Chong epics to *The Blues Brothers*. Reubens usually (but not always) plays Pee-Wee, or a character close to him; you're not supposed to get the sense that there's an actor portraying a character.

"I don't think that's my job, when I'm out there performing, to alert people to the fact that I'm somebody different and I'm just doing this character—to me that sort of wrecks it all. I don't drop the character in my act, but there's enough subliminal hints in there to know it's not somebody real. I don't know what people think, actually, 'cause a lot of people call me Pee-Wee. There's days when I don't want to live with that, but then I just don't subject myself to it—I'll just stay in or hang out with people who aren't going to do that. After

"It falls somewhere between classical stand-up comedy and conceptual something-or-other."

Paul Reubens as Pee-Wee Herman, the world's most obnoxious kid.
Photo © Laura Levine

three or four years I really am getting very used to it. It's like having a nickname, almost."

Since Reubens sees himself as a versatile actor, does he worry that all this attention focused on just one character will hamper his future non-Pee-Wee career?

"No, it's been like a doorway to a whole bunch of different things," Reubens answers. "It's made a lot of stuff that I've fantasized about for years happen, so I don't feel resentful; and I certainly don't feel bored, 'cause it continually grows. I know that it's very likely that I could get stuck, get typed into doing Pee-Wee Herman at the same time. I know that I have a pretty good range, and I figure I will do something different and people will either accept it or not, but I can still do it. And I think I'm going to have to do that at some point, probably very soon."

Reubens's artistic success with Pee-Wee is due largely to the sense that his portrayal isn't an act—he *is* that smart-alecky, wisecrack-filled, curious adolescent, and that's who's on stage. It's not imitation or parody, it's an honest characterization, and it's because Reubens's Pee-Wee is such a real and multi-faceted character that he succeeds in being so easy to empathize with, so much a window on our own Pee-Wee-esque traits and experiences.

"Well, I have to take him seriously, otherwise it would be like doing some sort of cartoon. There are a lot of cartoony elements to Pee-Wee, but to perform it or be that character it has to be real. Pee-Wee's a real person—he has depth and he's real smart. Most of what I do, I try to be loving, not satirical. I'm not really making fun of anything, my show—which was called a satire of a kids show—wasn't so much satire as a kids show."

In the works are a full-length film, *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure* ("An epic, action-packed adventure story," warns Reubens.), currently scripted but not produced; a great 45, "I Know You Are, But What Am I?", presently demoed but not released; a couple of films with Pee-Wee in featured parts; some shorts of his own; possibly further live dates, either with his solo stand-up act or his complete stage show, and more of the usual talk and comedy show spots. And there's always *The Pee-Wee Press* newsletter to keep you informed (really! 7906 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 210, LA, CA 90046). Reubens is optimistic about his and Pee-Wee's future; he figures this is the decade when "avant garde becomes commercial," and that should suit Reubens and his unique performance alter ego just fine. And though he personally perceives Pee-Wee as more performance art than comic diversion, Reubens appreciates whatever it is about Pee-Wee that people find amusing—particularly his ability to liberate the adult from the sophistication supposedly accrued in the years since they were nosy, obsessive, awkwardly arrogant little Pee-Wees themselves.

"I think most everyone has either known a character like that or was that character. Everyone has a different connection to it, so the reactions are going to be different. You get a lot of people reduced to what they were like when they were young; it opens up something where they can be reduced to being real juvenile for an hour or so."

—Tim Sommer

Paul Reubens in his civvies.
Photo © Laura Levine

WRAP
THE PIRATE TELEVISION STATION DARES BOOK REVIEWS WHERE NO ONE HAS GONE BEFORE
© 1983 MATT HOWARTH
I DON'T LIKE DOGS... AND NEITHER DOES RALPH STEADMAN
YOU MIGHT REMEMBER RALPH AS THE MAN WHO HAS SURVIVED ILLUSTRATING THE RANTINGS OF HUNTER S. THOMPSON, LEWIS CARROLL, FREUD AND MANY MORE... BUT—IN HIS NEWEST BOOK, NO GOOD DOGS (PENGUIN/PERIGEE), STEADMAN PROVES HIS SOLO VICIOUSNESS WITH CRUEL, GRAPHIC INSIGHT INTO CROSSING, DISCIPLINING AND COPING WITH THE UGLY LITTLE HAIRY THINGS. STEADMAN'S UNCANNY EYE FOR CAPTURING THE UGLY SIDE OF ANYTHING IS HEARTRENDING.
HEAVY METAL
YOU WILL BE INSTANTLY INSULTED BY THIS BOOK—OR YOU'LL DIE LAUGHING. IT'S JUST EXTREME.
BEFORE I GIVE THE MENTAL PICTURE I'LL HAVE OF DOGS, STEADMAN SHOWS THEM FOR WHAT THEY REALLY ARE—LOCKED IN YOUR CLOSET, STEALING BASHFUL POODLES, AND THE SLOBBERING MESS THEY PUT IN PUBLIC. NOW—DESPITE ITS SELF-DESTRUCTIVE COVER PRICE—THIS BOOK IS CONSIDERABLY CHEAPER THAN THE CAST. GO—BUY IT OR ELSE!
THANK YOU, GOOD NIGHT AND MAY YOUR MESS
HEAVY
WELL, RYAN, I REALLY WANNA THANK YOU FOR THE SCROLL COMPUTER-ANIMATING YOU DID FOR THAT VIDEO-REVIEW YOU SAVED MY BUNS FOR SURE THIS TIME. I COULDN'T VERY WELL HAVE GONE ON-CAMERA LOOKIN' LIKE THIS...
...MUST BE A POWER HOUSE OF A BOOK... TO HAVE AFFECTED YOU SO DEEPLY...
WTH?!
IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, THE BOOK HAS TO BE RETURNED...

"I remember I saw 'The Spirit' the first time . . . and God, I went out of my mind."

Al Williamson at play.
Photo by Bob Bissett

EC LIVING

To anyone unfamiliar with his long career, **Al Williamson** can be described most simply as the dean of comic book science fiction. After a childhood amid the lush jungles surrounding Bogota, Colombia, Williamson moved back to the USA in 1944, and in 1948 began working in comics. His superb early work for E.C. in the early to mid-fifties—often done in collaboration with friends Frazetta and Krenkel—set the standards by which all future comic book sf would be judged.

Williamson's work is characterized by the sense of absolute authenticity that pervades it, by the wry wit that occasionally prompts him to include portraits of his friends, and by the superbly drawn and heroically endowed figures who people his delightfully alien landscapes. Throughout the sixties, seventies, and into the eighties, Williamson was the only member of the E.C. art team who continued to regularly produce comics. His work has appeared in the King Features *Flash Gordon* series, in *Creepy* and *Eerie*, the comic adaptations of *Return of the Jedi*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, and *Blade Runner*, as well as the past several years of both the daily and Sunday *Star Wars* newspaper strip. This interview was conducted at Williamson's studio in a neat little Pennsylvania village remarkably reminiscent of Norman Rockwell's archetype of the American small town.

—S. C. Ringgenberg

HM: Why were you drawn to the comics in the first place?
AW: Because I liked them. When I discovered them, I loved them.
HM: What was it about comics—the fantasy world they created, or the drawing?
AW: Yes, for want of a better description, that would be it.

PRINCE WILLIAMSON

Great comics are mostly great storytelling. Sure, the art's important, and so's carefully written dialogue/narration. But, the person who controls the pacing, the "camera angles," the lighting, the characters' facial expressions and body attitudes, etc., is the one who either makes the thing work or wrecks it. In movies, the director is in control of these elements, and usually takes the credit (or blame) for the storytelling. In the comics' eighty-plus year lifetime, there've been some really terrific "directors."

Al Williamson isn't one of them—he's purely and simply an *artist*.

Sure, Eisner can put you right in those dark alleyways beside the Spirit, and Bilal can take you on a walk through the City that Didn't Exist—but these guys (and storytellers like Jack Cole, Carl Barks, Noel Sickles, and Harvey Kurtzman) play to the intellect as much as the emotions. Williamson goes for the heart.

Like his friends/contemporaries Frazetta and Wood, Williamson puts on paper things that are just too beautiful/hideous/wondrous to fit into the narrow confines of reality. He's one of a precious few who can look our collective dreams, fantasies, and nightmares into a cage of ink lines, where they're safely on view.

You'll see a lot of these untamed beauties in ***The Art of Al Williamson***, by **James Van Hise** (Blue Dolphin), which features extensive interviews (with Williamson as well as pals like Frazetta, Krenkel, Gaines, Bradbury, Goodwin, and others), along with sketches and finished panels going back to the late forties, several complete stories, a 132-segment sf episode of the Williamson/Goodwin "Secret Agent Corrigan" daily strip, and two weeks of unpublished "Star Wars" dailies. It all demonstrates that a "mere" artist like Williamson, when teamed with a top-notch comics writer, can create work that any "director" would be proud to claim as his own.

Of the great comics storytellers, many are dead or retired or out of the field altogether; a few have fallen into pleasant but unrewarding stagnation. Only Eisner is still having a direct influence on the artform he's contributed so much to over the past forty-five years.

One of Eisner's influences was **Harold Foster**, who drew the "Tarzan" Sunday strip during much of the thirties, and from 1937-1971 wrote and illustrated the full page, Sunday-only "Prince Valiant." In ***Prince Valiant, An American Epic; Volume One, 1937*** (Manuscript Press), editor **Rick Norwood** has assembled a limited edition of the first forty-six strips, in their original size and shot from either the original art or the finest prints obtainable. It's a wonderful introduction to something no longer in existence (the strip still appears, but suffers from the postage-stamp size reduction that's killed so many great adventure strips of the past), and it's also a way of seeing something that "isn't comics" work as comics. With no word balloons, the "Prince Valiant" story was told entirely in text-blocks appearing above or below the illustrations—and what classic illustrations they were, with none of the exaggeration of figures or insane foreshortening that passes for dynamic comic art these days. It should have been staid and dull, but it was vibrant and alive, because the truly good writing and intricate, accurate artwork complemented one another so beautifully.

The $100 price is high—coming to just over $2 per page—but when you consider what you'd have to pay to scrounge up the yellowed pages from newspapers almost a half-century old, it might just be one of life's little bargains.

—John Workman

Williamson's Flash Gordon, from a 1980 National Cartoonists Society portfolio.
(Reprinted from *The Art of Al Williamson*.)

(Blue Dolphin Enterprises, 8423 Production Ave., San Diego, CA 92121-2278; Manuscript Press, P.O. Box 1762, Wayne, NJ 07470)

the whole idea of this different world of the printed page, of adventures. I enjoyed the funny stuff as well. To actually be suddenly given these comics. It was just like a kid of five seeing *Star Wars* for the first time. When I look back now, I realize that this was for me, that I'd always love it. I think we're always looking to recapture that first thrill we have when we first see something—whether it's a film, or whether it's comics.

HM: How does it feel to have a job that's essentially an extension of your fantasy life?

AW: Kind of nice. To be able to do what you've always loved to do, wanted to do as a kid. You know, six months after I started finding these comics, I started drawing for the sheer love of it—not because I thought I was an artist or anything. I sat down to draw for fun. I was not a child genius or anything like that. It wasn't until 1940 when I was about nine or ten—that I started drawing my own comic books in regular lined composition books. The first artist who inspired me was an Argentine, Carlos Clemen; he was the first one that really made me enjoy comics, so I took after him. And then, of course, I discovered Raymond and Foster and Caniff. So, of course, that was exciting as hell to find something like Alex Raymond; and Foster was just incredible. I guess those were the happiest days of my life, 1939, 1940, and 1941. I remember I saw "The Spirit" the first time in Spanish, it came out in color and God, I went out of my mind. It wasn't for a couple of years that I realized that Will Eisner was the same guy who did "Hawks of the Seas" under the name of Willis B. Ransie. "Hawks of the Seas" was a great strip, it was one of my favorites. I used to get it every week when it came out. When they stopped, with the 126th or 125th page, that was it. It said: The End. I almost cried that it wasn't going to come out anymore. I mean, I really lived this stuff.

HM: When you were a kid, did you indeed live the strips? Did you go off and play "Flash Gordon" and "Prince Valiant"?

AW: Absolutely. I was actually more this hero that Carlos Clemen had created. His name was Arturo Moreno. I used to put on a gunbelt, and I even took a shirt that I had and cut it the same way that Carlos had drawn the character with a torn shirt. And I'd put on a backpack and I'd go out to the backyard and climb trees and pretend. What am I saying? People are going to read this! (Laughter)

HM: Do you think that people in the comics business are more childlike than in other businesses?

AW: Well, I think they enjoy life a little more. I think in some respects they work just as hard—if not harder—than the guy who's punching the timeclock, and I think [they] have more of an open mind. A child will have an open mind to a hell of a lot of stuff. People don't realize it. And hell, I'm fifty-two years old and I still enjoy watching the old serials. You have to have an open mind. You can learn a hell of a lot, you can mature, but what a pity to lose the love of all this stuff that you had as a child. A lot of grownups lose that, and it's really a shame. That's what shocked me so much when I first came to the States in 1944, and I met artists, cartoonists. They didn't give a damn about collecting the strips or anything like that. Until I met Roy (Krenkel) in 1948, I didn't really meet a guy who cared for the stuff the way I did.

HM: What else are you interested in besides film and comics?

AW: I like jazz. I like the old black bands very, very much. I love listening to the old stuff. You listen to the Count Basie records of the thirties and that stuff is incredible. It's absolutely great. I mean the simplicity of those takes—they're only about two and a half minutes, three and a half minutes long. The more you listen to them, the better they get. Those guys had class, let's face it. There was so goddamn much talent around in the thirties, in so many ways, in the film industry, in the music industry, in comics. There was so much talent, it's mind-boggling.

It was just the peak of everything. It's been going downhill ever since. That's a personal opinion. (Laughter)

HM: Were you ever attracted to anything else?

AW: Not really. I always wanted to play the drums. I mean, Gene Krupa and Buddy Rich were also heroes of mine. But, I just didn't have the feel for it. I wish I did, because it would be nice to be able to do something else.

HM: Do you think you're going to stay with comics for a few more years?

AW: As long as they'll have me.

HM: So you don't plan on retiring?

AW: Well, I can't, I have to work until I'm eighty-four and then I'm going to die. I suspect that there won't be any money around to retire on, so I'll be working until they'll either have to shoot me, or I'll die at the drawing board, you know. One or the other.

Vernon Fisher's "Holy Ghost," part of the Whitney Museum's Comic Art Show

(Delahunty Gallery)

STRIP SHOW

Something funny's going on here. Comics are experiencing a renewed bout of respectability, recognized both as source material for the wonderful world of Fine Art and fodder for social anthropologists. The occasion is the **Whitney Museum's Comic Art Show**, a collection of vintage strips exhibited alongside homages to masters like Chester Gould and Ernie Bushmiller.

Mounted on a $5,000 budget by museum fellows John Carlin and Sheena Wagstaff, the show features over eighty works—from Eskimo sculptures of Olive Oyl to photos of cartoon-graffitied subway trains—aimed at "messing up the boundaries between art and popular culture," according to Carlin.

When that goal is most successfully realized, the two camps trade commentary on the formal structures and aesthetic strictures that separate them. Prefiguring Pop Art's referential irony, Cliff Sterrett lampoons Picasso-esque females in a 1920's "Polly and her Pals" strip. Frank King's 1930 "Gasoline Alley" strip goes one step beyond, following Skeezix and Uncle Walt through the world of a modernist painting, trailing blurs of paint behind them as they pass Cézanne trees and Van Gogh seas. Pop artists exaggerated the funny papers' technological processes—Warhol's off-register images and Lichtenstein's oversized Ben-Day dots—to simultaneously expand and modernize the visual vocabulary of painting.

Not surprisingly, the works are divided into distinct categories: pre-Pop formal experiments; Pop, which glorified the banality of its subject; and post-modernists who dissect, mutate, and reposition comic characters in strange tableaux. The post-moderns—Chicago's Haley Who contingent and graffiti stars Keith Haring and Kenny Scharf—utilize Pop's preoccupation with junk imagery as a springboard for aesthetic and moral judgements (like Steve Gianakos's uneasy Lulu/Christ and Dogwood/Hitler pairings in his "Lovers and Other Strangers" triptych). Clearly, cartoon characters have transcended their identity as mass-produced disposables, emerging as pictorial icons and psychological symbols.

The impressive show catalog traces the history of comic arts in a series of well illustrated essays that sometimes lapse into dense stream of art history ese. Throughout the artists are said to quote cartoonists, yet little note is made of contemporary cartoonist/illustrators who use fine art compositions (Jeff Jones, Mike Kaluta), or "quote" strip masters like Harvey Kurtzman (Charles Burns's E Borbah'l Surprisingly, *HM* itself is ignored in the brief essay on the development of underground comix, which more or less concludes that *Raw* is the last and latest development in the form. Though the essays offer information, insights, and a touch of overblown analysis, the catalog and exhibition don't truly articulate the ultimate irony of comics' permeation into all levels of American life. But then, what can you say about a society in which artists prize the virgin Nancy over the Virgin Mary?

David Keeps

(The catalog, published and edited by Fantagraphics, is available at the museum, as well as by mail, for $6.95, from 196 W. Haviland Lane, Stamford, CT 06903.)

THE COMICS CHOPPING BLOCK

"Ten years ago Kirby wouldn't have allowed an embarrassment such as this out of his studio."

The biggest recent innovation in the comics biz hasn't been in concept, style, or format (though there's been some experimentation with each) but in distribution. Unprofitable newsstand scattershooting is out; direct feed from publisher to specialty shop/distributor is in. Catering to the comics cult—now apparently numbering in the hundreds of thousands—has shown itself to be a lucrative pursuit, to the point where publications aimed solely at this cult are becoming the focal point of the industry. Not only have the majors—Marvel and DC—introduced Direct Sales books, but many distributors (who, as the first to hear the rustle of cash changing hands, should logically be the quickest to hounddog onto an exploitable new market) are now publishing their own comics to satisfy the starving rut-howl of demand (echoing what happened a half-century ago with the pulps).

Like another recent marketing success—cable television—direct sales comics are narrowcasted to consumers who presumably are ready, willing, and hungry to snap them up (who else strolls into a comic shop?). Ideally, this tighter audience targeting should afford the field as a whole more freedom (less waste and adjustment of expectations). And just as cable TV operates without FCC regulation, direct sales comics are immune to the ludicrous Comics Code Authority (a paper super-villain if there ever was one). Given all this, comics should be entering an era of unprecedented innovation, experimentation, taboo-deflowering, dangerous envisioning, etc., right?

Of course not. Even bozo comic-readers aren't so naive as to believe *that* toothfairyism. Needless to say, most of the new books excreted in this deluge have been mere re-perfumed packages of the same old guano: costumed superheroes, macho space mercenaries, curvy babes in spandex jumpsuits, etc. Proof again that, even when granted their much-lipserviced freedom, most "artists" will produce exactly the same hanksquat they produced under supposed restraint and censorship. Proof also that the enthusiasts of any artform rarely welcome true innovation: they want things to stay exactly as they were. It's an ugly world.

It would be most unfair to deny that *some* good stuff has indeed come out (though not really any more than we've gotten in earlier boom times). Welcome are the handful of quirky out-of-category books that (can you hear me God?) should find an audience large enough to ensure their survival: Sergio Aragonés's ***Groo the Wanderer*** (Pacific); the Lazarus-like rebirth of Joe Staton's ***E-Man*** (First); Bruce Jones's EC-homage anthologies ***Alien Worlds*** and ***Twisted Tales*** (Pacific); and the brothers Hernandez's ***Love and Rockets*** (Fantagraphics).

Following is a representative sample of other recent Direct Sales books to be found on comic shop shelves, and some reactions.

Destroyer Duck (Eclipse) Fairly amusing Steve Gerber penned satire, ass-ended by colossally inept Jack Kirby art (with enough basic errors in perspective to make an amateur wince). Ten years ago Kirby wouldn't have allowed an embarrassment such as this out of his studio. What's happened to the man?

The Rocketeer (Pacific) What the Stray Cats are to Carl Perkins, Rocketeer creator Dave Stevens is to Flash Gordon's Alex Raymond—not so much pastiche as modernist reinvention. Slickly executed (esp. the swell domes) entertaining adventure that—thanks to a general creative bankruptcy—passes for fresh air. Back-up feature is Spiderman creator Steve Ditko's screechingly absurd "The Missing Man," who blanks out key parts of his body so bad guys sending knuckle sandwiches his way won't hurt themselves on his chin. Sheesh—how the mighty have fallen.

Red Sonja (Marvel) Mary Wilshire (comely *HM* cartoon reviewer last seen here in September) took up pencilling this mid-run, sexy-sword-swinging-babe series with the second issue. With Nestor Redondo's exquisite brushwork it's shaping into one of Marvel's best-looking books. Skip the words, though, they're the usual subliterate, mock-antique idiocy.

Ronin (DC) Or should I say "*Frank Miller's Ronin*"? Sheesh—how the tiny have risen. This eon-spanning melodrama is a pricey bit of hubris, confusingly laid and hastily drawn. Art style is a sort of sub-Eisner scribble somewhere between Moebius and Gene Colan (without the former's precision or the latter's touch with shading). Refreshing lack of text blocks (all plot carried by word balloons, leading characters to speak in expositional declarations). Miller shows promise, but he's got lots to learn.

Nexus (Capital) Artist Steve Rude is another boy with promise, but at the moment he's painfully amateurish and derivative. He's too obviously comic-spawned, and hasn't yet learned to successfully bridge the areas where his photo reference and swipes (Williamson, Kane, Manning) fall him. At least he favors clean, simple composition (unlike the clutter-crazed compulsives that dominate mainstream comics), Mike Baron's story is typical (commendable flashes of humor), but his word balloons yelp for editing.

American Flagg! (First) This Howard Chaykin-auteured sf series is the best traditionally-formatted comic to soil my fingertips in a good ten years. The art is Chaykin at his unhurried best (he skillfully uses the medium's time-honored limitations—spongy paper and fuzzy printing—as an asset to add texture instead of removing definition), but the *real* surprise is that this boy can *write*! As smart as it is smartassed, as well thought-out as it is well laid-out: this is that rarest of rarities: the perfectly balanced comic. Attaboy Howie!

—Lou Stathis

"*American Flagg!* is the best traditionally-formatted comic to soil my fingertips in a good ten years."

Starslayer (First) It's rubber stamp time, folks! As an "alternative" this is one of the worst comics Marvel never did. At least Mike Grell pumped some vitality into the earlier Pacific issues. Now without his influence, *Starslayer* is just another fan's space opera.

Lancelot Strong, the Shield (Red Circle) I prefer the "Mighty Comics Group" Jerry Siegel-Paul Reinman campy trash from the sixties—it was fun. This recently revived Rich Buckler stuff is confusing (two Shields), and it's tedious junk. If you want Kirby, buy some reprints. He never swiped.

Black Diamond (Americomics) A third-rate comic built around a (real) fifth-rate semi-porn actress (Sybil Danning from *Chained Heat*). Does anyone know who she is, or give a shit? Funniest of all, they want two bucks for this badly drawn Bond ripoff. Forget it.

Americomics Another class act from the *Black Diamond* people. This features the Blue Beetle and other cast-off Charlton characters with art meant for a fish mag. Now it's an expensive paper with garish color at two smackers. The cover is by Pat Broderick, who after ten years still can't draw. Ditko did it better. Trash it.

Eclipse Monthly Ah, fresh air! I like the b&w mag, but I'll settle for this color revival. Marshall Rogers scores with the cute "Cap'n Quick and a Foozle," likewise for Trina Robbins, and Ditko supplies one of his new nutso heroes. Best of all, a new Western called "Rio," by Doug Wildey. Good stuff.

—Tom Sciacca

NAHALLYWOOD

There is no doubt in my mind that **Graham Chapman** is one of the silliest individuals in the world; the other five being John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, and Michael Palin, the remaining members of a troupe known, collectively, as Monty Python.

So, I found myself in an odd situation recently: sitting across from Chapman discussing his first solo film effort, ***Yellowbeard***, a send-up of pirate adventures detailing the life of a nasty sort who, during his lifetime, murdered more than five thousand men (Most of whom were unarmed or at least badly mutilated, brags the pirate.

Being a Chapman fan, I was too polite to actually say, "The movie kinda bit the big one, Graham."

Being too polite an interviewee, Chapman never once said, "Yes, I thought it bit the big one, too."

Now both of us knew the movie wasn't so hot. Both of us knew why. Yet, neither of us would actually talk about it. Bad manners and all that.

So, basically, we danced around the subject, and what emerged was a conversation that not only spotlighted Chapman's frustrated genius but, in a roundabout way, underscored the cowardice of the Hollywood movie-making machine and its complete misunderstanding of humor (particularly Chapman's).

"It was quite a battle to get the movie done at all," Chapman ventures in a subdued tone. "I think you run into problems whenever you try to do something original. When someone can't see what you're doing, snap their fingers, and say 'Oh yes, that reminds me of So-And-So,' they get very suspicious about it until they see an audience response. That's when it becomes a battle."

For Chapman, getting his feisty sense of the absurd across has always been a battle, but one that arose out of necessity.

"I don't know when it first occurred to me that I could be funny," he says. "Perhaps it was from having a policeman father and not wanting to conform to any of the conventions of society that started me off. I became, in many ways, a silly person."

"I think that humor helped me. It eventually got me out of a conventional profession — medicine. Two weeks of ears, noses, and throats and I decided that I didn't want to spend the rest of my life — let alone the next three weeks — peering down the backs of people's noses and removing rather nasty things from their throats. I opted for comedy."

Hooking up with a group of other frustrated university types, Chapman became one of the founding members of Monty Python's Flying Circus, a group that brought terrifyingly new meaning to the word "chaos."

"It was hard to establish Python humor," says Chapman. "There was no precedent for it, really. We were basically influenced by two different schools of comedy: *The Goon Show* (featuring Spike Milligan and Peter Sellers) and *Beyond the Fringe* (featuring *Yellowbeard* co-scripter Peter Cook and Dudley Moore).

Beyond the Fringe had a sense of sophisticated humor and showed us that comedy was a credible thing for a university graduate to do.

"*The Goon Show* was pretty anarchic. It gave the impression of not really liking the medium that put it out — and certainly not the people who controlled it, the BBC. We found ourselves in the same situation when we came to do television. They didn't understand what we were doing at all. They certainly didn't find it funny. They were rather angered, in fact, when we became popular. None of us (Python members) have ever been greeted warmly because of our ideas. We've always crept into places without being welcome."

"The BBC was rather angered when Monty Python became popular."

One of the areas Python has crept into with great success has been cinema. But although their movies always make money, the Python members tend to drift apart for long periods of time between films.

"We all started primarily as writers," Graham explains, "and, as such, have always been involved in other projects. When we finish a movie, we all go off and do other things. That's one reason we're still all together. We encourage that, even though we're all very bitchy about each other's individual work. It also means that when we do get back together as a group after having separate experiences, we bring all those experiences back into the unit."

While none of the Pythoners' individual efforts have equalled the success of the group films (although Terry Gilliam's *The Time Bandits* came pretty close), they very much value their artistic freedom. It was that sense of creative abandon that led to *Yellowbeard*.

The idea for the slapstick-swashbuckler actually arose out of a suggestion from the late Who drummer Keith Moon that Chapman play a movie pirate. Several years and a collaborative script between Chapman, Peter Cook, and Bernard McKenna later, *Yellowbeard* was ready to set sail. Almost.

"There was certainly an influence exerted (by Orion Pictures) to make it, uh, PG, I suppose," Chapman offers politely. "There was the expressed worry that the humor was too obscure, too British. There was a push in the American direction."

Chapman waxes philosophic: "It's merely a question of us (Pythons) as individuals, not having as much creative control as we do as a group. Hopefully, our individual careers will mirror what's happened to us as a group and, gradually, we will get more control."

The assemblage of the *Yellowbeard* cast and crew plays like a classic "What Not to Do" scenario for a filmmaking class. For starters, American director Mel Damski was hired. Damski had little comedic experience, a claim he can still make after *Yellowbeard*. He is best known for a TV documentary on farm workers and such telefilms as *The Child Stealer*, *For Ladies Only*, and *Attack on Fear!* A master of slapstick he ain't.

In an effort to further Americanize the flick, key roles were given to American actors (Peter Boyle, Cheech and Chong, Madeline Kahn). Although *Yellowbeard* benefitted greatly from the presence of Chapman, Peter Cook, Marty Feldman, Michael Hordern, John Cleese, Eric Idle, and James Mason, it was brought crashing to its knees by most of the American team, who simply were not comedically suited to mouth the script's clipped, terse witticisms. (Try imagining Tommy Chong and Peter Boyle doing Monty Python's dead parrot sketch, and you'll get some idea of the problem.) Add to that Damski's total lack of comedic timing (when in doubt, cut to a shot of a ship plowing through the high seas) and the result is a comedy about as sprightly as a polished ballroom dancer.

"I *did* have fun playing Yellowbeard," Chapman stresses. "He was such an outrageous character. There was the other aspect of the film, however, to contend with, worrying about maintaining the artistic integrity of the piece despite the assaults of other people who worried, 'Will American audiences understand the humor?' Sometimes I'd just hope they'd go away."

"I think people became overly concerned with the humor's accessibility as opposed to more important things like: Is it funny? Are we being faithful to what we originally liked about the story?"

Graham Chapman after seeing the final cut of *Yellowbeard*.

I do understand their behavior. That's the pity. If I didn't understand it, I'd be more vicious. I think it's slightly muddled thinking.

As for the constant scenic shots of ships plowing endlessly from one side of the screen to the other, he sighs, "That's the director trying to show a different side of himself, that he can take pretty shots which don't have anything to do with the comedy."

Chapman is very calm about the finished film, as a British gentleman should be. Although he bemoans a few lost scenes ("There's a great bit with Eric Idle talking about being hard on his men and his assistant misunderstanding the use of the words 'hard on.'"), and his lack of presence in the editing room ("I felt like a lone voice in the wilderness."), Chapman is generally optimistic about this baptism of fire.

"Is it the movie I envisioned?" he ponders. "Yes. Almost. I suppose. Well, there are always errors in interpretation. It's impossible to find someone with the same view, artistically, as yourself. Thankfully, there are enough good pockets to keep me reasonably happy." He offers a thin smile. "Reasonably."

Undaunted by his first bout with filmmaking, Chapman is planning another comedic collaboration with performer-writer Cook. "I can't say what it's about because there's always the chance that someone will nip the idea. But it's very [illegible]."

I'm also tempted to direct it. I know more about filmmaking now, and I think I could do a good job. With Python, I never considered directing because others in the group—Terry Jones and Terry Gilliam—were keen on it. That was fine. Now, I'd very much like to be more involved every step of the way."

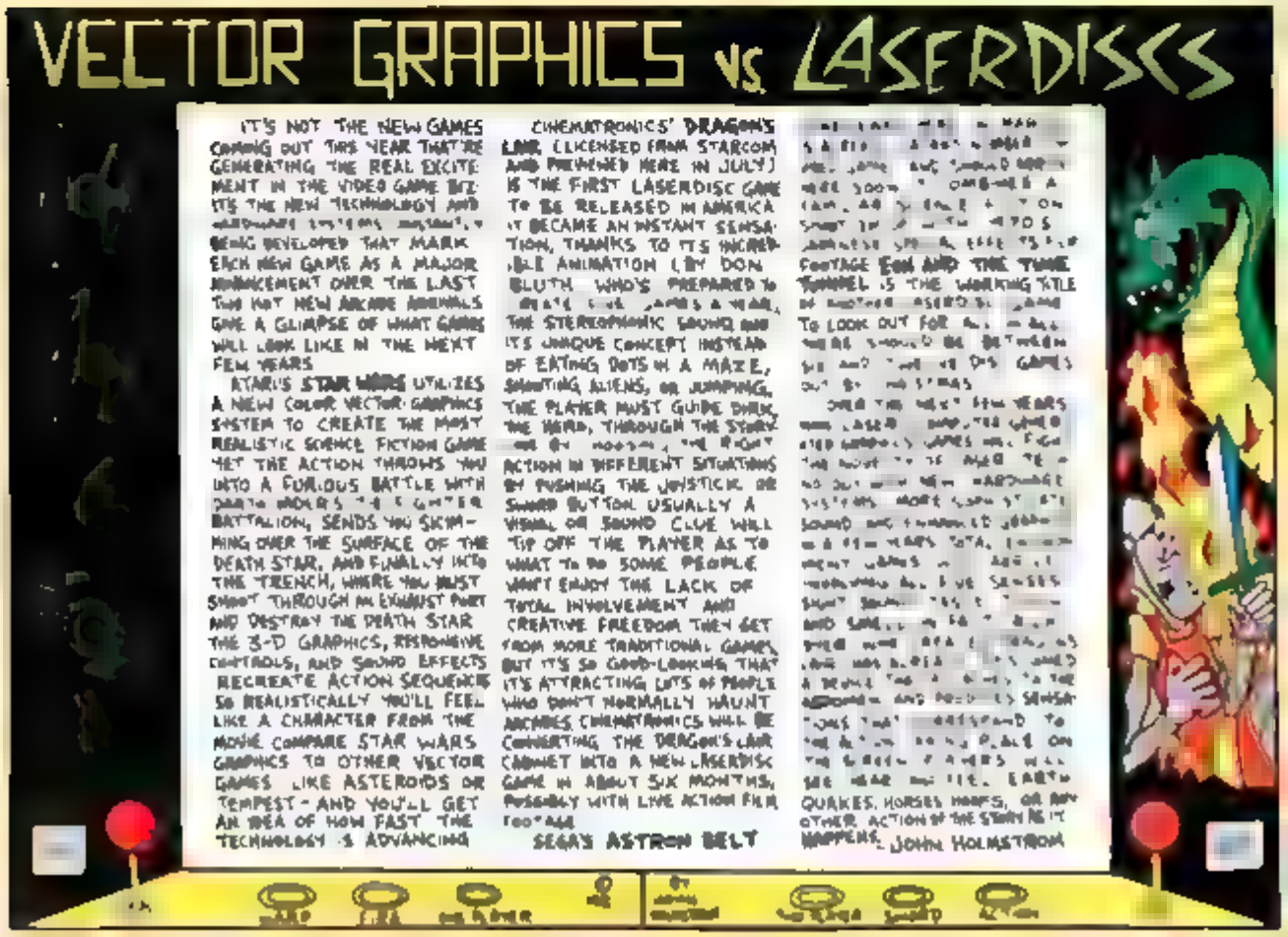
Hopefully, by the time Chapman's second film is ready to roll at Orion, the powers that be will recognize three things: 1) Graham Chapman is a comedic original, 2) comedy cannot be ordered or churned out like cheese-whiz and 3) real laughs are not mass produced.

"I think the secret of our success, both as Pythons and individuals," Chapman says, "is that, when we write, all we aim to do is make other people in the group laugh.

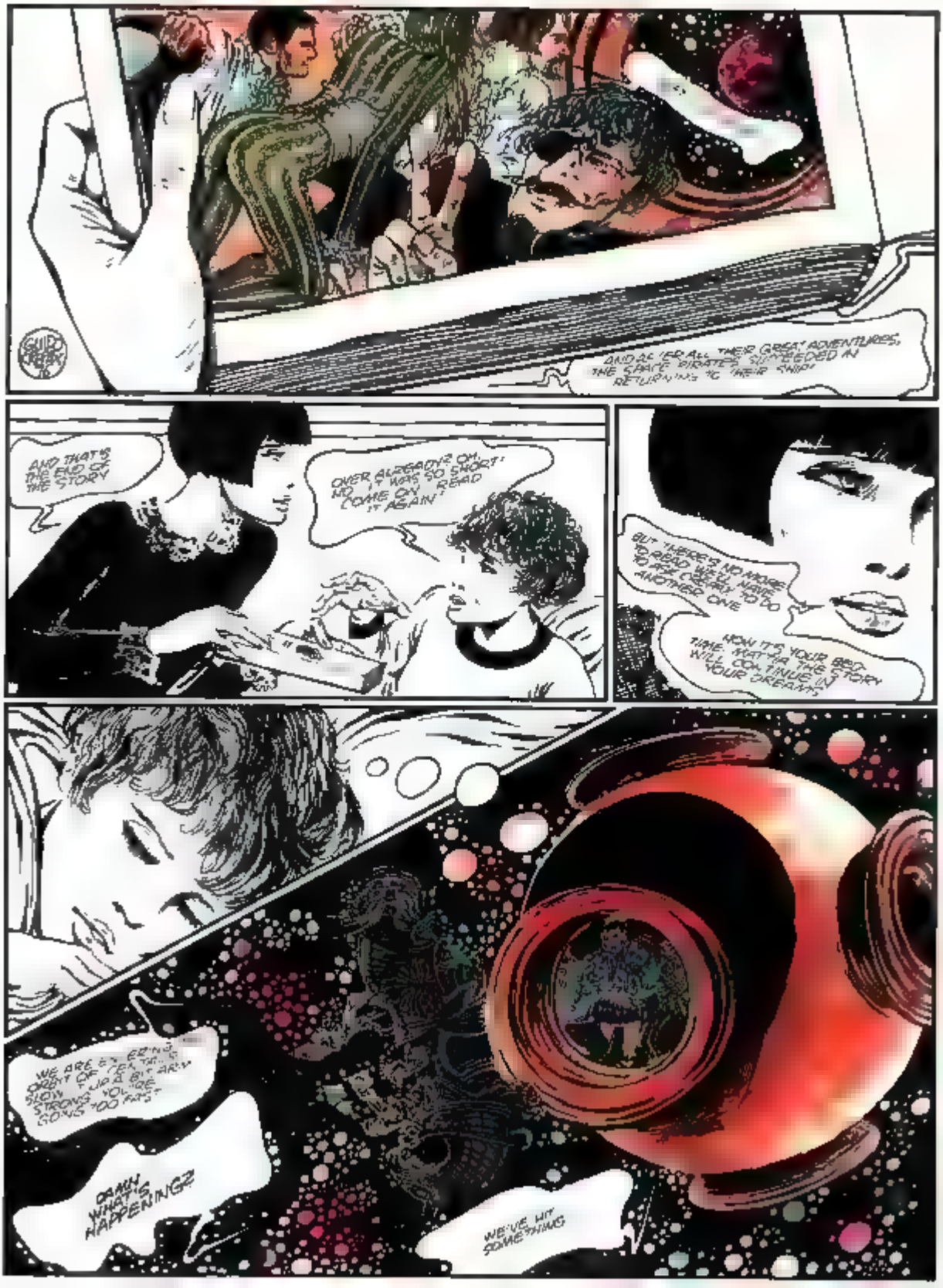
"You don't think about the audience, you think about the people you know and respect. If you can make them laugh, you're bound to have the audience laughing. We Pythons do that all the time, even with our individual projects. We pass our scripts back and forth. Your friends are always the most critical. If you can make a good friend laugh, you've succeeded."

Through their laugh-inducing antics over the last decade or so, the Python crew have made a lot of friends in audiences around the world. Maybe it's time for the movers and shakers in Latviland to wake up and get friendly. If they keep on second-guessing the Python pack when it comes to comedy, the joke will be on them ... and none of us will be laughing about it, either.

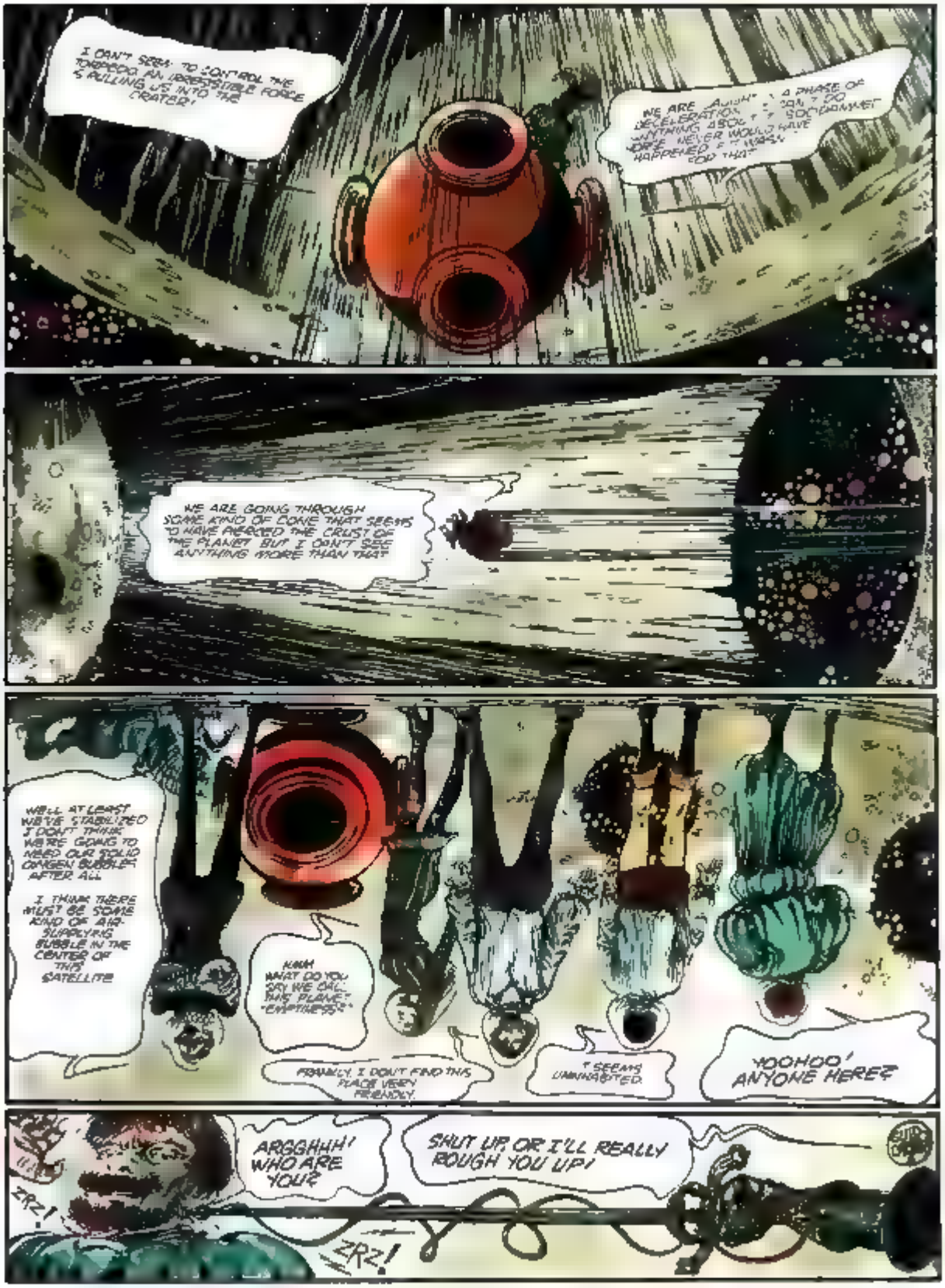
In The Works: Disney is quietly preparing a movie concerning the exploits of a baby brontosaurus who, being born in the 20th century, experiences unique culture-shock growing pains. **Richard Donner** (*Superman*) is hard at work in Italy filming a swashbuckler, **Ladyhawke**. The film stars **Matthew Broderick** (*War Games*), **Rutger Hauer** (*Blade Runner*) and **Michelle Pfeiffer** (*Scarface*). Meanwhile, it doesn't look like **Chris Reeve** is up for a **Superman IV** even though the series' producers are. **Robert Powell** and **Timothy Bottoms** will take the adventurous route in **Secrets of the Phantom Caverns**. New World Pictures will co-produce a $3 million horror opus, **Children of the Corn**. The movie, based on a short story by **Stephen King**, will benefit from a screenplay by King. The flick concerns a young couple who wander into a seemingly deserted Nebraska town and discover that the cornfields serve as home base for a cult of crazed kiddies led by a Manson-like teen. Oh boy. NBC has ordered a few more episodes of the [illegible] out opus, **V**. **Bill Murray** is teaming with **Dan Aykroyd** and **Harold Ramis** for **Ghostbusters**. Aykroyd and Ramis will script. Ramis and Murray last paired on *Stripes*. **Leonard Nimoy** is close to finishing his work as director on **Star Trek III: The Search for Spock**. Yeah, of pointy ears will be in the film, but no one is saying in what form. Animal, Mineral, vegetable. Hollywood agent [illegible]

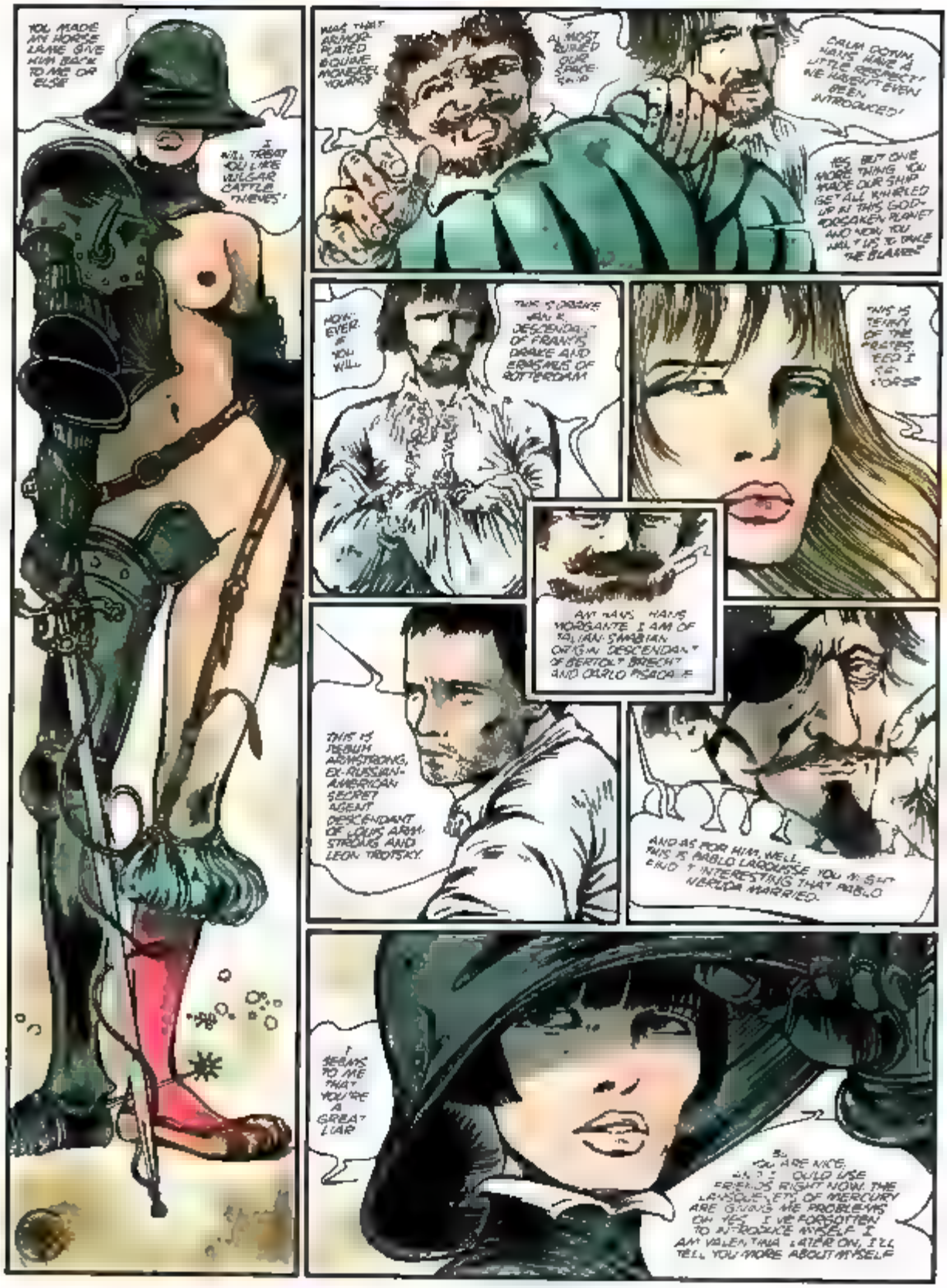

VECTOR GRAPHICS vs LASERDISCS
IT'S NOT THE NEW GAMES COMING OUT THIS YEAR THAT'RE GENERATING THE REAL EXCITEMENT IN THE VIDEO GAME BIZ. IT'S THE NEW TECHNOLOGY AND [illegible] BEING DEVELOPED THAT MARK EACH NEW GAME AS A MAJOR ADVANCEMENT OVER THE LAST. THE HOT NEW ARCADE ANIMALS GIVE A GLIMPSE OF WHAT GAMES WILL LOOK LIKE IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS.
ATARI'S STAR WARS UTILIZES A NEW COLOR VECTOR-GRAPHICS SYSTEM TO CREATE THE MOST REALISTIC SCIENCE FICTION GAME YET. THE ACTION THROWS YOU INTO A FURIOUS BATTLE WITH [illegible] ENTER BATTALION, SENDS YOU SKIMMING OVER THE SURFACE OF THE DEATH STAR, AND FINALLY INTO THE TRENCH, WHERE YOU MUST SHOOT THROUGH AN EXHAUST PORT AND DESTROY THE DEATH STAR. THE 3-D GRAPHICS, RESPONSIVE CONTROLS, AND SOUND EFFECTS RECREATE ACTION SEQUENCES SO REALISTICALLY YOU'LL FEEL LIKE A CHARACTER FROM THE MOVIE. COMPARE STAR WARS GRAPHICS TO OTHER VECTOR GAMES LIKE ASTEROIDS OR TEMPEST - AND YOU'LL GET AN IDEA OF HOW FAST THE TECHNOLOGY IS ADVANCING.
CINEMATRONICS' DRAGON'S LAIR, LICENSED FROM STARCOM AND PREMIERED HERE IN JULY, IS THE FIRST LASERDISC GAME TO BE RELEASED IN AMERICA. IT BECAME AN INSTANT SENSATION, THANKS TO ITS INCREDIBLE ANIMATION. LEN DON BLUTH, WHO'S PREPARED TO [illegible] JAMES A YEAR, THE STEREOPHONIC SOUND AND ITS UNIQUE CONCEPT. INSTEAD OF EATING DOTS IN A MAZE, SHOOTING ALIENS, OR JUMPING, THE PLAYER MUST GUIDE DIRK, THE HERO, THROUGH THE STORY [illegible] THE RIGHT ACTION IN DIFFERENT SITUATIONS BY PUSHING THE JOYSTICK OR SWORD BUTTON. USUALLY A VISUAL OR SOUND CLUE WILL TIP OFF THE PLAYER AS TO WHAT TO DO. SOME PEOPLE WON'T ENJOY THE LACK OF TOTAL INVOLVEMENT AND CREATIVE FREEDOM THEY GET FROM MORE TRADITIONAL GAMES, BUT IT'S SO GOOD-LOOKING THAT IT'S ATTRACTING LOTS OF PEOPLE WHO DON'T NORMALLY HAUNT ARCADES. CINEMATRONICS WILL BE CONVERTING THE DRAGON'S LAIR CABINET INTO A NEW LASERDISC GAME IN ABOUT SIX MONTHS, POSSIBLY WITH LIVE ACTION FILM FOOTAGE.
SEGA'S ASTRON BELT [illegible] FOOTAGE. EVIL AND THE TIME TUNNEL IS THE WORKING TITLE [illegible] To LOOK OUT FOR [illegible] SHOULD BE BETWEEN [illegible] DPS GAMES [illegible] THESE. OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS [illegible] LASER [illegible] GAMES WILL [illegible] THE MOST [illegible] AND [illegible] NEW HARDWARE [illegible] SYSTEMS. MORE [illegible] SOUND AND [illegible] GAMES [illegible] A FEW YEARS [illegible] GAMES [illegible] AND SAVE [illegible] THEIR [illegible] AND [illegible] A WORLD [illegible] THE [illegible] AND [illegible] SENSATIONS [illegible] ON THE [illegible] PLAY ON THE [illegible] GAMES WILL BE NEAR [illegible] EARTH QUAKES, HORSES' HOOFS, OR ANY OTHER ACTION OF THE STORY AS IT HAPPENS. JOHN HOLMSTROM

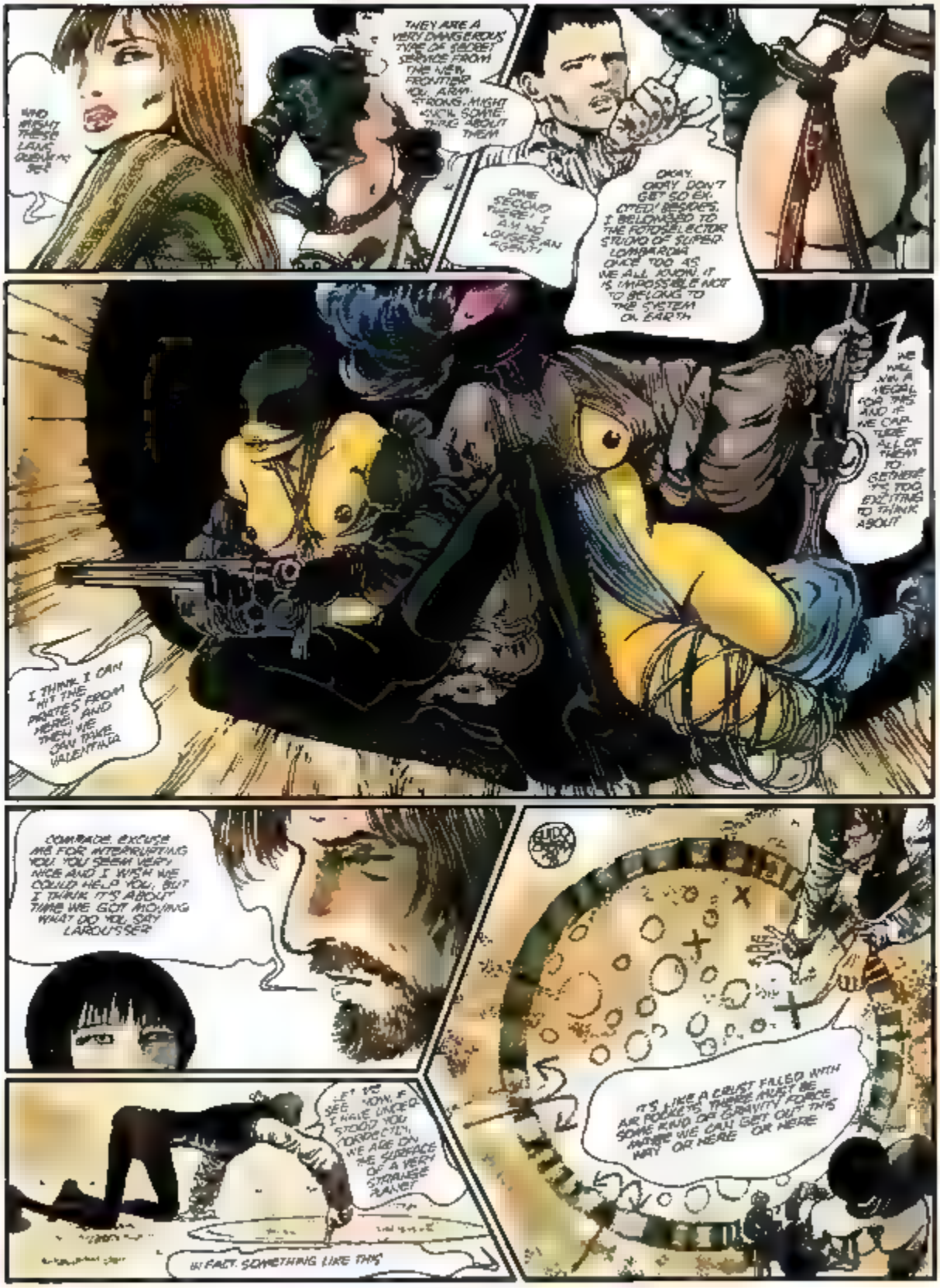
VALENTINA THE PIRATE


AND AT LAST ALL THEIR GREAT ADVENTURES, THE SPACE PIRATES SUCCEEDED IN RETURNING TO THEIR SHIP!
AND THAT'S THE END OF THE STORY
OHH AL GRAZIA!? OH, NO, IT WAS SO SHORT! COME ON, READ IT AGAIN!
BUT THERE'S NO ANGIE TO READ WELL, HAVE TO ASK CESAR TO DO ANOTHER ONE
NOW IT'S YOUR BED-TIME, KATIA. THE STORY WILL CONTINUE IN YOUR DREAMS
WE ARE BEING OBJECT OF TEN THOUSAND BUT ARMY SHIPS STRONG, YOU'RE GONE TOO FAST
OHHH! WHAT'S HAPPENING?
WE'VE HIT SOMETHING

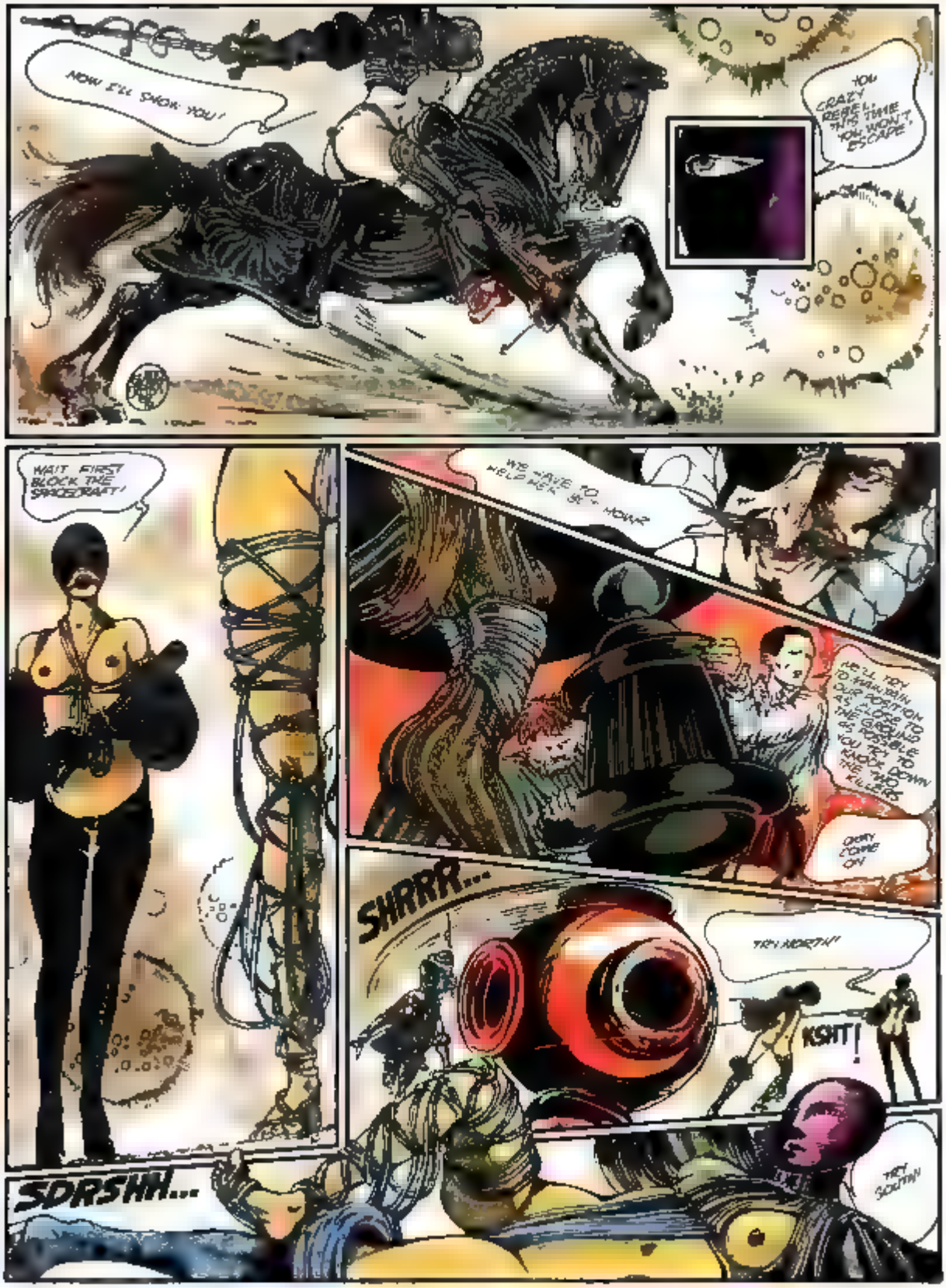
IT'S NOT POSSIBLE HE SEEM TO HAVE LOST A HORSE
HEY, JEANNY!

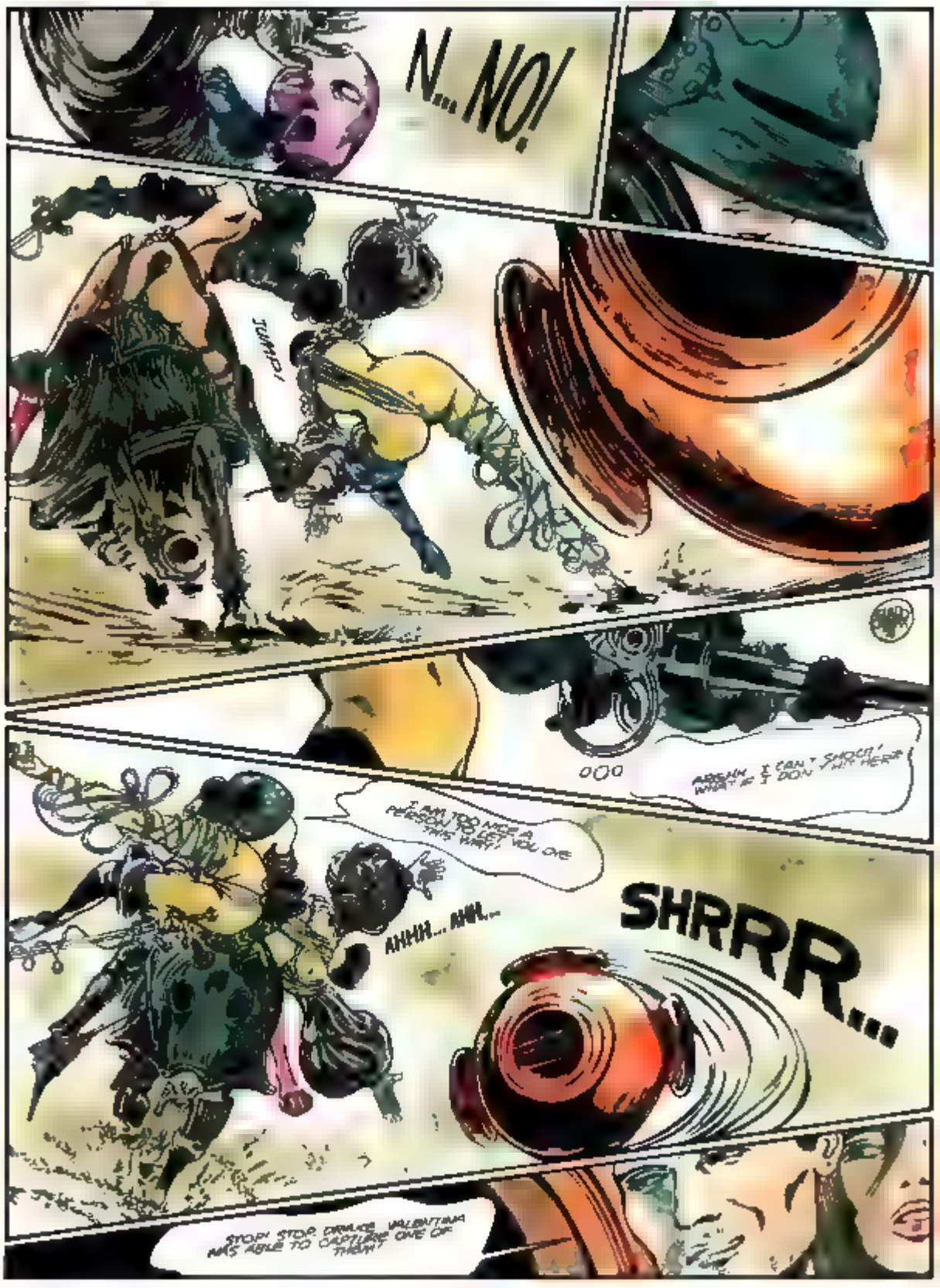

I CAN'T SEEM TO CONTROL THE TORPEDO, AN IRRESISTIBLE FORCE IS PULLING US INTO THE CRATER!
WE ARE ALIVE! A PHASE OF DECELERATION... I CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT THE SOLIDIFIED MAGMA! SOMETHING MORE NEVER WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF I WASN'T GOD THAT
WE ARE GOING THROUGH SOME KIND OF CONE THAT SEEMS TO HAVE PIERCED THE CRUST OF THE PLANET BUT I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING MORE THAN THAT
WELL, AT LEAST WE'VE STABILIZED I DON'T THINK WE'RE GOING TO NEED OUR SOLID OXIGEN BUBBLES AFTER ALL
I THINK THERE MUST BE SOME KIND OF AIR-SUPPLYING BUBBLE IN THE CENTER OF THIS SATELLITE
HMM WHAT DO YOU SAY WE CALL THIS PLANET "EMPTINESS"
FRANKLY, I DON'T FIND THIS PLACE VERY FRIENDLY
IT SEEMS UNINHABITED
YOOHOO! ANYONE HERE?
ARGGHHH! WHO ARE YOU?
SHUT UP, OR I'LL REALLY ROUGH YOU UP!
ZRZ!
ZRZ!


YOU MADE MY HORSE LAME. GIVE HIM BACK TO ME OR ELSE!
I WILL TREAT YOU LIKE VULGAR CATTLE THIEVES!
WHAT THAT ARMOR-PLATED BOUBIE MONGREL, YOUNG?
I ALMOST BURIED OUR SPACE-SHIP.
CALM DOWN, MAN! HAVE A LITTLE RESPECT! WE HAVEN'T EVEN BEEN INTRODUCED!
YES, BUT ONE MORE THING YOU MADE OUR SHIP GET ALL WHEELED UP IN THIS GOD-FORSAKEN PLANET AND NOW YOU HAVE TO TAKE THE BLAMES
NOW-EVER, IF YOU WILL.
THIS IS DRAKE VAN K. DESCENDANT OF FRANK'S DRAKE AND ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM
THIS IS TERRY OF THE PRETTY-EED I AS 'ORSE
AH HAS HANS HORSANTE I AM OF ITALIAN-SHABIAN ORIGIN. DESCENDANT OF BERTOLT BRECHT AND CARLO PISACANE
THIS IS JEBUH ARMSTRONG, EX-RUSSIAN-AMERICAN SECRET AGENT. DESCENDANT OF LOUIS ARMSTRONG AND LEON TROTSKY.
AND AS FOR HIM, WELL, THIS IS PABLO LAROUSSE. YOU MUST KNOW THAT PABLO NERUDA MARRIED...
IT SEEMS TO ME THAT YOU'RE A GREAT LIAR
SO, YOU ARE NICE, BUT I COULD USE FRIENDS RIGHT NOW. THE LANGUEDOC OF MERCURY ARE GRAVE WE PROBLEMS OH YES... I'VE FORGOTTEN TO INTRODUCE MYSELF. I AM VALENTINA. LATER ON, I'LL TELL YOU MORE ABOUT MYSELF


WHO MIGHT THESE LAME QUEEN BE?
THEY ARE A VERY DANGEROUS TYPE OF SECRET SERVICE FROM THE NEW FRONTIER YOU, ARMSTRONG, MIGHT KNOW SOME THING ABOUT THEM
ONE SECOND THERE! I AM NO LONGER AN AGENT!
OKAY, CORY DON'T GET SO EXCITED! BESIDES, I BELONGED TO THE FOTOELECTOR STUDIO OF SUPER-LOMBARDIA ONCE TOO AS WE ALL KNOW, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE NOT TO BELONG TO THE SYSTEM ON EARTH
WE WILL WIN A MEDAL FOR THIS AND IF WE CAN, TAKE ALL OF THEM TO GETHER IT'S TOO EXCITING TO THINK ABOUT
I THINK I CAN HIT THE PIRATES FROM HERE! AND THEN WE CAN TAKE VALENTINA
COMRADE, EXCUSE ME FOR INTERRUPTING YOU. YOU SEEM VERY NICE AND I WISH WE COULD HELP YOU, BUT I THINK IT'S ABOUT TIME WE GOT MOVING WHAT DO YOU SAY LAROUSSER
LET ME SEE NOW, IF I HAVE UNDERSTOOD YOU CORRECTLY, WE ARE ON THE SURFACE OF A VERY STRANGE PLANET
IN FACT, SOMETHING LIKE THIS
IT'S LIKE A CRUST FILLED WITH AIR POCKETS. THERE MUST BE SOME KIND OF GRAVITY FORCE THERE WE CAN GET OUT THIS WAY OR HERE OR HERE

OH, BUT
ZTRAF!...!
THE LANSQUENETS ARE HERE ALREADY!
DAMN! AND WE HAVE NO WEAPONS!
LET'S GET TO THE HORSES!
I CAN'T DO THAT. IT'S NOT WORTH IT!
WHAT'S HAPPENING, VALENTINA?
LEAVE ME. I HAVE TO
COME ON, POTEMKIN! STAND UP!


NOW I'LL SHOW YOU!
YOU CRAZY REBEL, THIS TIME YOU WON'T ESCAPE
WAIT. FIRST BLOCK THE SPACECRAFT!
WE HAVE TO HELP HER OF COURSE
WE'LL TRY TO MAINTAIN OUR POSITION AS CLOSE TO THE GROUND AS POSSIBLE YOU TRY TO KNOCK DOWN THE TWO KILLERS
OKAY, COME ON!
SHRRR...
TRY NORTH!
KSHT!
TRY SOUTH!
SDRSHH...


N... NO!
THUMP!
000
ARGHH WHAT IF I CAN'T SHOOT HER
I AM TOO NICE A PERSON TO GET YOU ONE
AHHH... AHH...
SHRRR...
STOP! STOP DRMLGE VALENTINA HAS ABLE TO CAPTURE ONE OF THEM!

TO BE CONTINUED

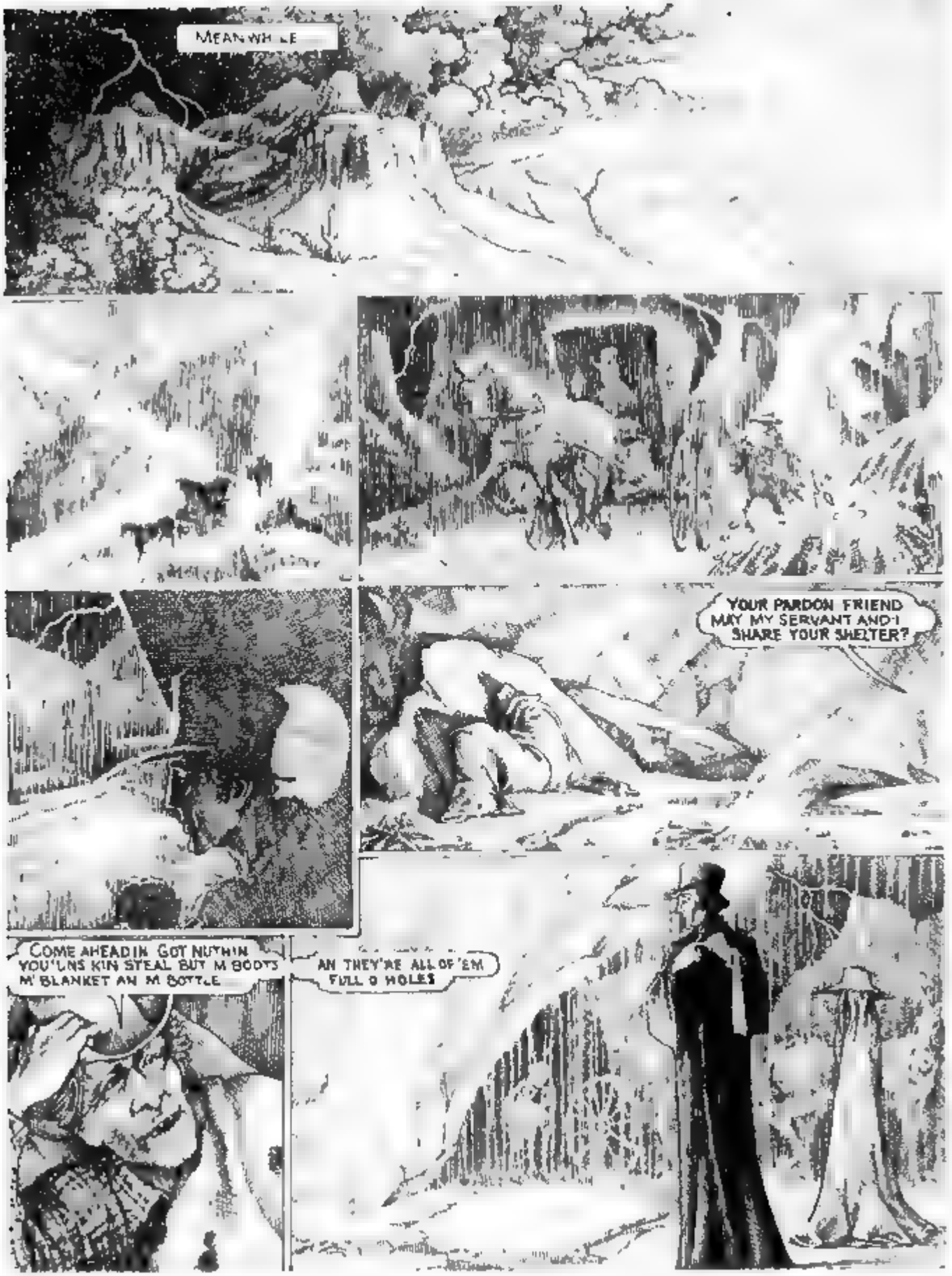
Meets the Toast of Europe
PART 2
Room &
No Drinkin' Gamblin' Saxophu player
COMING SOON
S'PRISED YA AIN'T
WITH TH THINGS
EGHAM SAID NOTHING
HERE'LL BE NO PRACTICING
SECOND THOUGHT, I'VE A GOOD MIND TO
I'LL NOT HAVE
DEMAN, HONEY! LOOK AT THAT
STURM

AFTERNOON, LADIES. GOD KNOWS IT'S HOTTER N HELL, AIN'T IT? WISH THAT DAMN STORM'D HURRY UP AN GET HERE ..
COOL THINGS OFF A BIT! UH, DO I HAVE THE HONOR OF ADDRESSIN' TH WIDOW BURNS?
WELL, NEVER!
IT MAY WELL BE THE FASHION IN PHILADELPHIA, MR STOKER, BUT OUT HERE GENTLEWOMEN ARE NOT ACCUSTOMED TO CASUAL SWEARING.
IF YOU MUST PRACTICE LOOSE LANGUAGE IT WOULD BE WELL TO DO SO WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THE NOOSE AND GIBBET SALOON, OR THAT OTHER ESTABLISHMENT WHOSE NAME I REFUSE TO UTTER
YES'M
ONE WOULD THINK THAT A MAN WHO MAKES HIS LIVING AS A JOURNALIST COULD FIND A MORE CREATIVE MEANS OF EXPRESSING HIMSELF.
YOU TELL HIM, HETTIE!
YES MAAM YOU'RE RIGHT M'HUMBLEST APOLOGIES
APOLOGY ACCEPTED NOW YOU MAY COME HAVE SOME LEMONADE AND ASK ME ANY QUESTIONS YOU WISH TO ABOUT THIS MUSICIAN, MISTER PAGANO.
MUCH OBLIGED BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND. HOW DID YOU KNOW.
SHOOT SONNY! WORD TRAVELS 'ROUND HANGMAN'S CORNERS FASTER'N SPIT ON A RED HOT GRIDDLE
THAT OUGHTA TELL YA SOMETHIN' ABOUT YER FANCY NEWSPAPER.

LATER THE SAME DAY, AT THE
HOPE ANDY GOT
T'HIGH GROUND
I AIN'T BEEN TALKED TO
L KE THAT SINCE I WAS A
B-BUH-BELLCH'
WIDOW BLACK
LORD!
WIDOW BLACK

NOW I'M TELLIN'YA! JUST DON'T YOU SIT ME STARTED ON HER!
HELP ME! SOMEBODY GRAB 'IM, QUICK!
GIT TH' LAUD'NUM, BILL!
I GOT IT SOMEBODY BEND HI'S HEAD BACK
DON'T START ME TALKIN'! I'LL TELL EV'(GLUG GURGLE)
WHAT HAPPENED? WHA'D I DO T' SET HIM OFF LIKE THAT? I DIDN'T MEAN NUTHIN'
...TALKIN' 'BOUT WIDDER BLACK..
T'WEREN'T NO FAULT O' YORE'N, MISTER L PORCQUE'S JUS' GOT THIS LI'L PROBLEM WITH WIDDA BLACK
JUSTA LITTLE MORE
LORD..DON'T START ME.. GURGLE
HAUL HIM BACK T' TH STOREROOM, BOYS. HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT THERE 'TIL HE COMES 'ROUND.
PROB'BLY WON'T REMEMBER ANY O' THIS
HUH? WHA..?
WHAT WAS HE TRYIN T SAY, OR NOT T' SAY, ABOUT WIDOW BLACK?
NOBODY KNOWS. NOBODY NEVER HAS LET HIM GIT STARTED TALKIN' ABOUT HER
ONE THING'S FER SURE, SHE'S TH' NOSIEST OL' BIDDY IN THREE COUNTIES
SHE THINKS SHE OWNS TH' TOWN 'CAUSE SHE'S TH' HANGMAN'S WIDOW.

UH . HANGMAN?
YEAH YOU KNOW, HANGMAN'S CORNERS?
THAT ONE
CAN YA IMAGINE TH' KINDA PERSON THAT'D MARRY A HANGMAN?
TH' ONLY ONE THAT'LL HAVE ANYTHING T' DO WITH HER IS TH' WIDOW BURNS.
TH WIDOW BURNS WE WAS JUST TALKIN ABOUT HER BEFORE TH INTERRUPTION
...WIDOW BURNS . ?
YEAH YOU WAS SAYIN' HOW SHE TREATED YOU LIKE YOU WAS A SCHOOLBOY .
M' NAME'S ROSE, STRANGER, ROSE TYRIEN
HE AIN T NO STRANGER ROSE HE S A NEWCOMER
SO MUCH TH BETTER
THAT'S RIGHT! I'M S'POSED T BE COVERIN' A STORY !
MPH!
HMP!


MEANWHILE
YOUR PARDON FRIEND MAY MY SERVANT AND I SHARE YOUR SHELTER?
COME AHEAD IN GOT NUTHIN YOU'UNS KIN STEAL BUT M BOOTS M' BLANKET AN M BOTTLE
AN THEY'RE ALL OF 'EM FULL O HOLES

GET OFF O' ME!
SIGNORE?!
A DREAM! THANK THE GOOD LORD!
NO MORE T'QUILA FER ME! WHEW!
I SWAHR T' GOD, I'D RUTHER DIE AN GO T' HELL THAN HAVE THAT DREAM AGAIN!
HEY, WHAR'S THAT LIL SIDEKICK O'YORE'N?
HE'S... OUTSIDE ATTENDING TO THE ANIMALS
AAGH!

GOD! IT WEREN'T NO DREAM!!
MISTER! HELP ME!
THERE IS NOTHING I CAN DO
HELP ME!!!
AT THE SAME MOMENT BUT MANY
TROLL SHIT! IT'S STOPPED LEAKIN BUT NOW IT'S ALL FOGGED UP INSIDE!
I JUST KNOW THERE'S SOMETHIN REALLY WEIRD GOIN ON
IT'S PLUMB FRUSTRATIN'
Hmb geteafan Tex
THAT'S EASY FER YOU T' SAY
YES TEX THERE DOES SEEM TO BE SOMETHING REALLY WEIRD GOING ON AND IT REMINDS ME AROUND THIS TIME OF YEAR AS THE APPROACH OF HALLOWE'EN. DON'T YOU ALWAYS WONDER JUST WHERE FOLKS EVER GOT THE NOTION OF GHOSTS WEARING SHEETS?
I KNOW I ALWAYS DO
PERHAPS WE'LL BOTH FIND OUT IN THE NEXT HAIR RAISING EPISODE.

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I'M AGE

FROM THE OOZE THE LUNGFISH CRAWLED. BRANCHING AND REBRANCHING ..

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The Fourth Song

The Fright of the Great Spectacle

by Arno and Jodorowsky

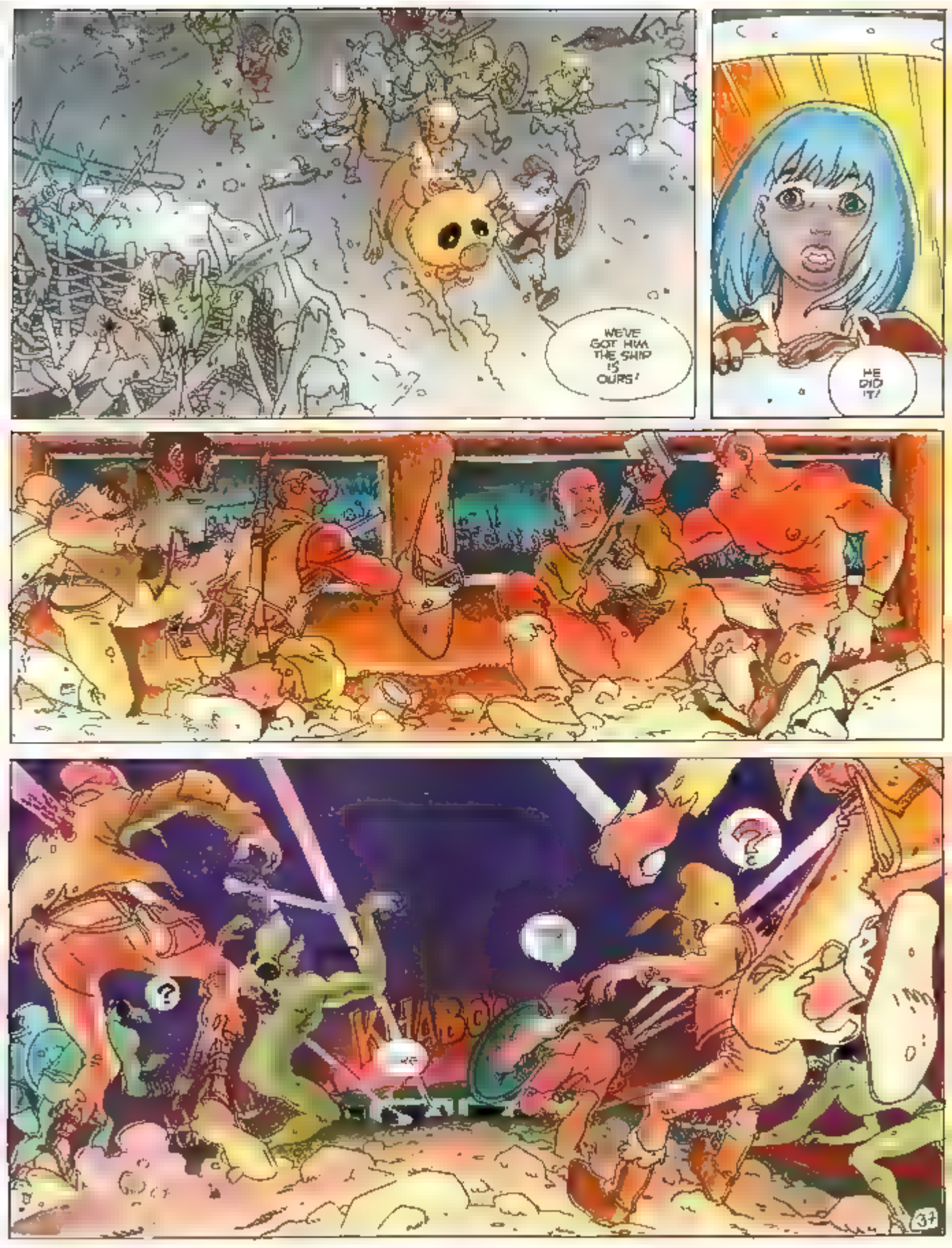
AND AT THAT VERY SAME MOMENT IN THE SHIP
GO AHEAD NER
HOLD ON
NER MY DEAR
HAVE A GOOD TIME HA HA HA
AS FOR ME WELL I'M LEAVING YOU HA HA HA
I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE SOMEONE IS CALLING ME
TAP TAP
ASTRAL 212
WHAT WILL I DO WITH ALL THIS CARBON
HA HA
I HOPE HE DOESN'T SEE ME!
PHEW I DON'T THINK ANY ONE SAW ME
NOW I'LL WAIT
32

KIROPTERA!
THERE'S ASTRAL
FLAP FLAP
MY BROTHERS
HURRY UP, MY BROTHERS. THEY'RE ALL DRUNK. THE CARGO IS OURS!
HOWEVER
THERE THEY ARE
BZMMMMMMM
UMP
33

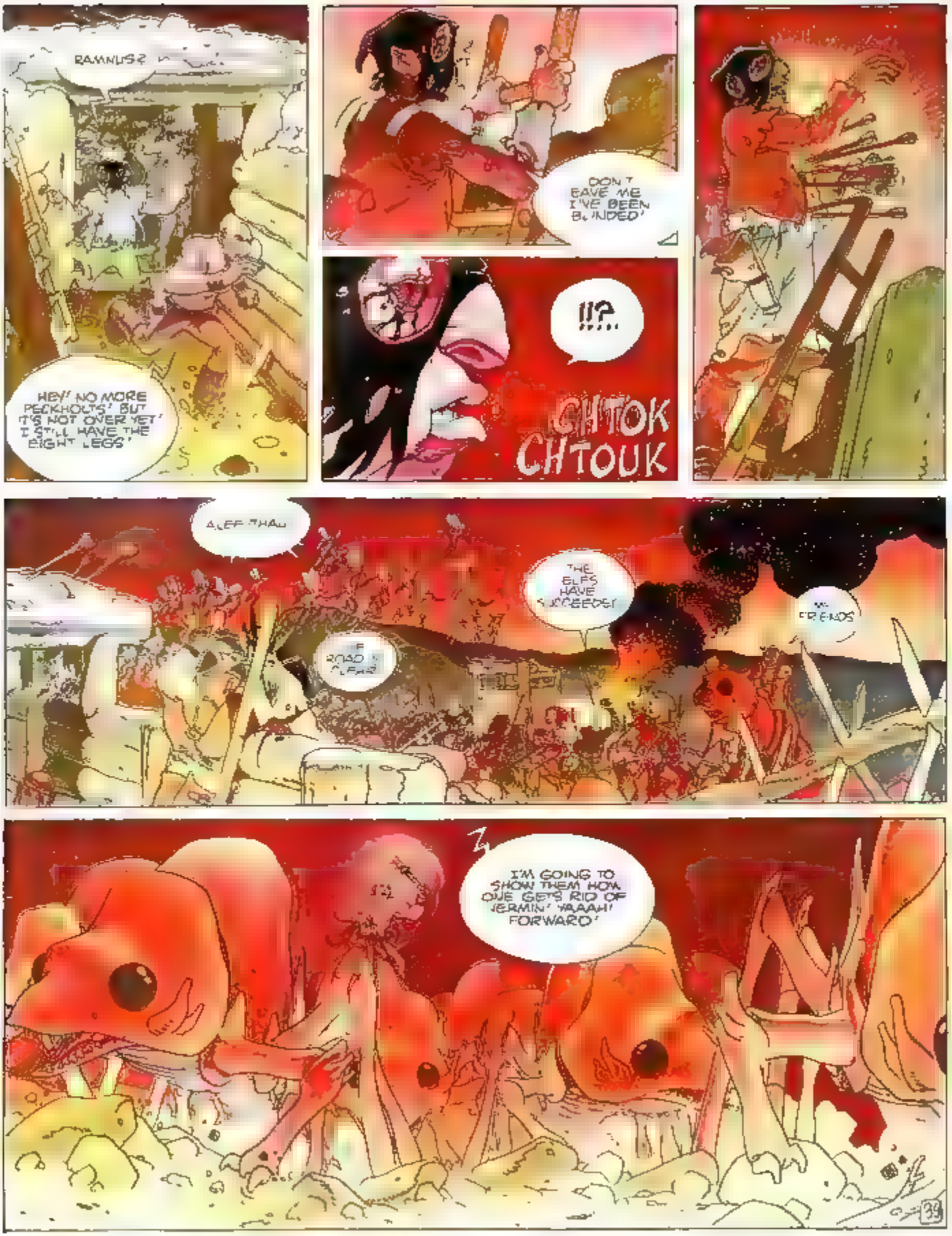
MMM
PLOUF
NO! DON'T LEAVE ME! TAKE ME WITH YOU!
IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME THING YOU COME, YOU WATCH ME, AND THEN YOU LEAVE WHY???
WHERE ARE WE BROTHERS?
IT'S THE NINTH AND LAST BARREL... NOTHING'S LEFT.

?!
HUH?
THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF THEM
YES! THEY'RE ATTACKING!
NAAAAAAAAHH
THEY ARE
THE YOULEES AND THE OLD ONES!
AN ATTACK?
WHOZ WHATS
IT'S... IT'S INCREDIBLE! THEY'RE EVERYWHERE! WE'VE BEEN HAD!
WHAT?
QUICK! WHERE'S ASTRAL!
MASTER?
I HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR HIM EVERYWHERE, BUT HE SEEMS TO HAVE DISAPPEARED!
THE TRAITOR!
WITHOUT HIM WE'RE LOST!
THE OLD MEN? HA!
GATHER THE OTHER PECKHOLTS AT ONCE!
ENOUGH, YOU BAND OF COWARDS! WE HAVE THE POWER AND THE PECKHOLTS!
JODO arno
35

AYAAAAHH.


WE'VE GOT HIM THE SHIP IS OURS!
HE DID IT!
KHABOOM
37

TAKE COVER
ALEF THAU I WE'RE NOT ADVANCING TYS THE DRAINTEGRANTS WHAT IS
HOG WE HAVE TO WARN HIM!
GNE THE SIGNAL LOUROULOU
THE SIGNAL
BOO
YOU HAVE CLAY PELLETS, BUT DON'T BE AFRAID TO USE YOUR PICKS!
MY EYES I CAN'T SEE ANY-THING!
WHAT THE
THE PECKHOLTS! THOSE DAMNED BEASTS ARE


RAMNUS?
HEY! NO MORE PECKHOUTS! BUT IT'S NOT OVER YET! I STILL HAVE THE EIGHT LEGS!
DON'T LEAVE ME I'VE BEEN BLINDED!
!!?....
CHTOK CHTOUK
ALEF THAU
THE ELFS HAVE SUCCEEDED!
E ROAD ALFAR
WE'RE ENDS
I'M GOING TO SHOW THEM HOW ONE GETS RID OF JERMIN' YAAAH! FORWARD!

LOOK OVER THERE
THERE ARE THE EIGHT LEGS! THEY ARE GOING TO CRUSH US
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
GET ME DOWN! SPREAD OUT! THERE MUST BE SOME WAY
YAAAAAAAH!!!
USING HIS MAGICAL POWERS, ALEF THAU ENTERS A TRANCE AND DEVELOPS AN ECTOPLASM
DID YOU SEE THAT? IT'S CRAZY!
I'M SCARED
INCREDIBLE! IT LOOKS LIKE FLAKES!
WHAT IS THIS WITCHCRAFT?
IN AN INSTANT THE ECTOPLASM HAD SPREAD, FORMING AN INDESCENT TIDAL WAVE AND CAUSING PANIC AND DISORDER
YIPPEE! THEY'RE FLEEING
YES HA HA IT'S COMPLETELY RIDICULOUS!
ALEF-THAU IS A GREAT WIZARD
40

AND IN THE SHIP
THEY'RE GOING!
KLUN KLUN KLUN KLUN
THE COMMAND ROOM IS JUST OVER THERE IF I CAN GET IN IT
AND JUST WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?
AA EE
YOU KNOW VERY WELL THAT YOU ARE FORBIDDEN TO GO THIS WAY!
HEY! WHAT ?
UHHHH
TAKE THAT
PHEW!
THIS TIME I'M GOING!
COME IN! I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU!

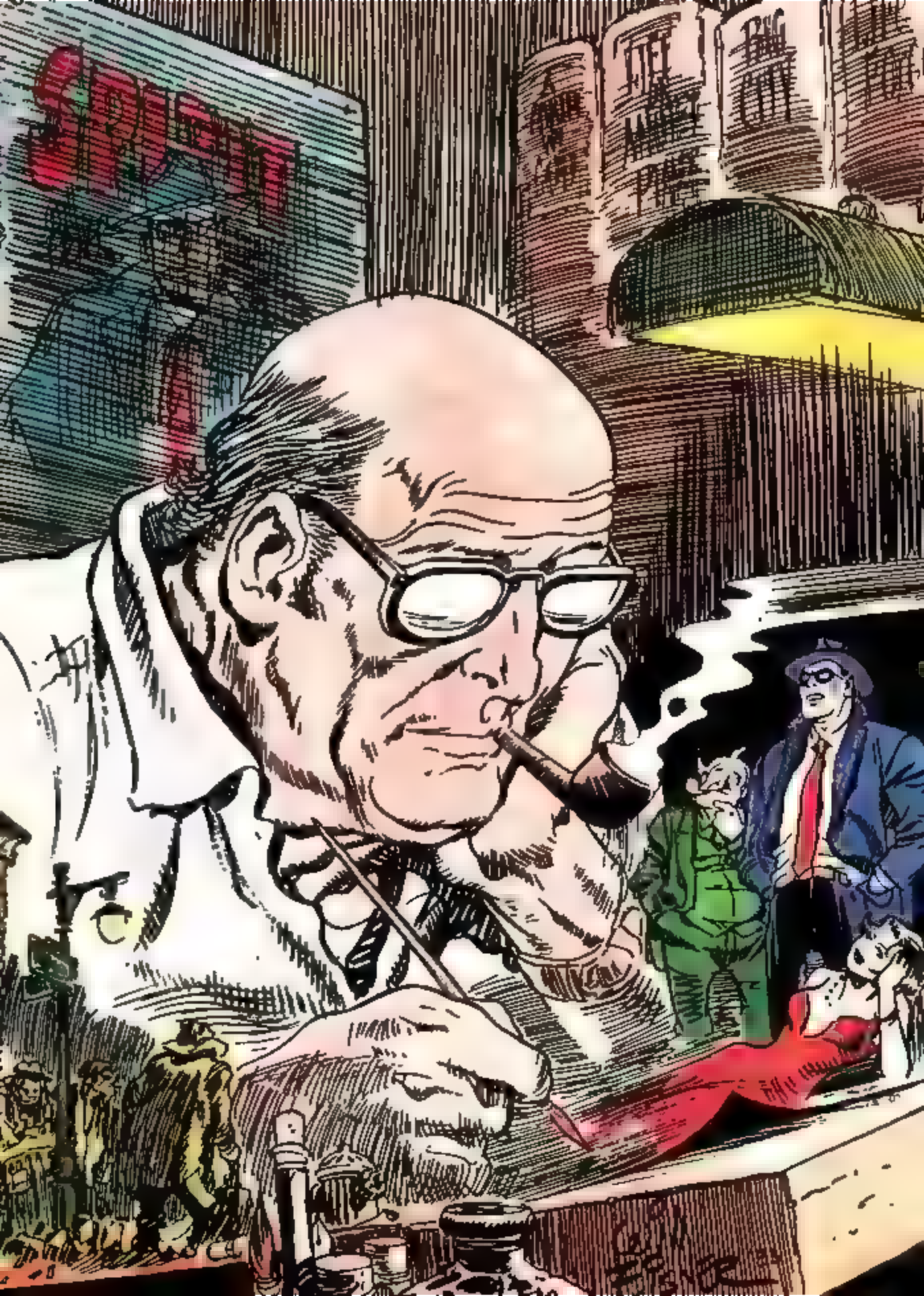
EVERYONE TO THE SHIP!
THE GIRL I AM FINALLY GOING TO SEE HER AGAIN!
ALL THIS BE ALIKE OF HIMR AN ARMLESS AN LEGLESS WILDR
FILTH!
UNNH
TCHOK
ALEF THAU
THERE HE'S ESCAPING
HE SACRIFICED HIMSELF FOR ME
WE COULD SAVE HIM WITH A TRANSFUSION OF VITAL FLUID IT'S IN THE SHIP!
NER RAMNUS HAS LOCKED HIMSELF IN!
WE CAN'T OPEN IT
WE NEED THE FLUID!
BOOM BOOM
COME ON! PUSH
42

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT ISSUE

JUNE 2050

STORY BY STEVE RIANGGENBERG ART BY SCOTT HAMPTON

"INDULGE ME, HUH? YA GOTTA ADMIT IT WAS MY FINEST HOUR, HUH?"
"YEAH THOSE REALLY WERE SOME FINE TAKES"
"RUN THE TAPES OF OUR LAST TRIP TO THE CRETACEOUS, CHUCKY-BOY"
"SO, YA WANNA WATCH YOURSELF BAGGIN' THAT ALLOSAURUS AGAIN, EH? EVERY TIME WE GET TOGETHER, YOU ASK TO SEE THAT ONE"
"TRY DAT'S ALL WE GOT LEFT OF THOSE TIMES HOW TIME SAFARIS ARE JUST SOMETHING TO TELL OUR GRANDKIDS ABOUT"
"IF THEY WANT TO LISTEN! AND IF THEY DON'T CURSE ALL TIME HUNTERS FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO THE HUMAN RACE!"
"BUT MAN'S ALWAYS BEEN A HUNTER, DAVE. HOW WERE WE ANY DIFFERENT FROM THE CAVEMEN OR ESKIMOS FOR TRAVELIN BACK TO HUNT DINOSAURS? AND HOW COULD WE HAVE KNOWN WHAT WAS GONNA HAPPEN?"
"DOESN'T REALLY MATTER, I GUESS, SINCE THE FEDS YANKED EVERY TIME LICENSE NOBODY'S GOING TO BE DOING ANY MORE TIME TRAVELING"
"YOU THINK THEY'LL EVER FIGURE OUT WHAT DID IT CHANGED US MEAN?"
"NOPE. COULDA BEEN ANYTHING, SOME FREAK VIRUS THAT DELGADO'S EXPEDITION BROUGHT BACK. OR SOMETHIN THEY KILLED THAT THEY SHOULDN'T HAVE"
SCOTT HAMPTON '93
"KIND OF IRONIC, WASN'T IT, THAT A DINOSAUR SAFARI BROUGHT BACK THE VIRUS OR WHATEVER- THAT TURNED US ALL INTO REPTILES?"
"YEAH, IRONIC, DAVE. BUT EVEN WITHOUT THE GOVERNMENT EDICTS, JUST COULDN'T SEE HUNTIN' DINOSAURS ANYMORE. IT'D BE TOO MUCH LIKE CANNIBALISM NOW, YOU KNOW?"
THE END


SPIGOT
PIPE
BIG
CITY

"...And I Threw in a Hat..."

A Talk with Will Eisner

Will Eisner may not be a genius, but in the history of comics, he'll do until the real thing comes along. People think they are doing Eisner a favor by comparing "The Spirit" to *Citizen Kane*, but "The Spirit" came out every week for thirteen years, and *Citizen Kane*, wonderful as it was, was just one movie.

The fact is, even without "The Spirit" in his resume' Will Eisner could lay claim to being the most important artist/writer/editor/creator/packager of the Golden Age of Comics. Blackhawk, Sheena, Uncle Sam—Eisner created and developed them all, along with Doll Man, Espionage, Hawk of the Seas and a dozen others he professes to have forgotten. And this was before World War II.

There are many creators and many great creations: Segar and *Thimble Theatre*; Barks and Uncle Scrooge; Kelly and Pogo; Kurtzman and *Mad*; Herriman and Krazy Kat; Cole and Plastic Man; Caniff and Terry; Kane and Batman; Gould and Dick Tracy. But of all of these, only Barks and his Donald Duck/Uncle Scrooge stories can really rank with the constant inventiveness, humor, and impact of "The Spirit." Eisner did things with storylines, visuals, and characterization that had never been done before in one strip. Parody, tragedy, humor, suspense, action, slapstick, sorrow—"The Spirit" had them all. Not every week perhaps, and not always at optimum effect, but Eisner had the nerves of a riverboat gambler, and there was nothing he was afraid to try. Most of the time, he had the skill to carry it off. And when he failed—well, a lot of comic artists and writers wish they could achieve in their work what passed for a failure in "The Spirit."

But talking about this is boring. "The Spirit" has to be read, and read again, to appreciate the enormity of Eisner's achievement. Luckily for us all, the stories from the forties and fifties are being made available in a variety of inexpensive formats. [See sidebar.]

As Jim Steranko once described "The Spirit," "Never has so much happened, to so many, in so few pages." And expanding on that—never have so many unique things happened, to so many fascinating characters, with such affective results. And even that's not enough.

Only the stories are enough. Will Eisner has told hundreds of them, and he has more to tell. And that's a very, very good thing to know.

—Mike Barrier

MB: I guess we should begin at the beginning, back before "The Spirit" had been created.

WE: About two years after I got out of high school, around 1936, I started a little company called Eisner and Iger in New York. We had one of the first bullpens of comic artists, with people like Bob Kane (*Batman*), who was doing a feature called *Peter Pupp* for us, and Jack Kurtzburg, who later became known as Jack Kirby. Actually, we also called him Jack Curtis and Jack Kurdery on his stories—we had *lots* of house names. I myself was doing five features under five different names.

MM: Such as?

WE: One was Willis B. Rensie—that's "Eisner" backwards—another was W. Morgan Thomas, another: Spencer Steele—that's a marvelous name, isn't it? I always wanted to be named Spencer Steele. That was when I still had hair, of course.

MM: I used to see those names on *Jumbo* and *Jungle* comics, and they didn't seem real.

WE: It was all part of the fantasy world of comics. Eisner & Iger started with $15.00—I financed the operation, so my name came first—and pretty soon we were flourishing. The idea of doing original art for comic books was a new one, but it was obvious to me that the newspaper syndicate stuff, that comic books were reprinting, was going to run out eventually, and that original material would be needed.

MM: So tell us what it was like for twenty-two-year-old Will Eisner walking from syndicate to syndicate, trying to peddle his character, the Spirit.

WE: I didn't go to them, they came to *me*. Eisner & Iger was making a lot of money—we were producing the entire Fiction House line, and that was just one account—and we had in short order developed a reputation for reliability. Now, around 1940, the Sunday newspapers were beginning to feel the competition from the superhero comic books, just as today video games are cutting into the sales of comic books. The syndicates wanted to get a comic book produced to insert into their Sunday papers. The Register-Tribune syndicate, under Henry Martin and with comic book publisher Busy Arnold [see Everett M. who had founded the Centaur line of comics in 1938] called me. They needed a combination of quality and reliability—you just don't miss deadlines in the newspaper business. What they wanted was a caped character like Superman, which was their concept of a comic book hero.

MM: But you dissuaded them from that concept.

WE: When they asked for a caped character, I said, "No!" flat out. It wasn't what I wanted to do. I realized that this was an opportunity for me—I was just twenty-two, and newspaper strips meant the big time for a cartoonist—but it was also a risk, and I was no novice. Nevertheless, I sold my half interest in the company to Jerry Iger who thought the whole idea was awfully risky, but wished me well. In hindsight I still get chills; a sensible, practical person wouldn't have taken such a chance.

Anyway, there were many arguments with the syndicate concerning the character and personality the strip was to have. The final decision came when one dark and rainy night at around 2 AM—I used to work all hours back then—I got a call from "Busy" Arnold. He was in a bar. I could hear a jukebox in the background as he talked. It was like a scene out of "The Spirit;" I was looking out over east forty-second street, and the rain was pouring down. "You got the character yet?" he asked me. I told him I had a detective character for them. He said, "Okay, we'll buy it." But then they found out that my detective was dressed normally, and what they wanted was a caped, Batman-type character. So we argued about whether I would put a costume on my character. Finally I gave in. "Oh, good," "Busy" said, "so what's the costume?" I told him, "He's got a mask." "Well," "Busy" said, "at least put gloves on him." So, the Spirit got a mask and some gloves, and I threw in a hat, which happened to be the same kind of hat "Busy" always wore. It was a private joke, and I don't think "Busy" ever caught on.

MM: You did great things with that hat.

WE: Yeah, but I kept trying to get rid of that *mask*. I'd put the Spirit in dark glasses. I'd do all kinds of things. But the syndicate was satisfied, because the product *looked* like the comic books of the day; therefore it was comics. But I was able to satisfy my creative instincts, right down to changing the logo every week, which was unheard of back then. Those were halcyon days for me.

MM: Until you heard from Uncle Sam.

WE: Apparently the army needed me badly. So I went—kicking and screaming all the way. But those four years in the Pentagon building opened my eyes to a whole new po-

tential for comics. Other people had been doing "The Spirit" while I was away, and it looked as though it was on its last legs. I took it over again, because I didn't want it to die.

HM: It was under Lou Fine's direction while you were away, wasn't it?

WE: Yes, but Lou had never had any interest in the writing end of the business. He had a brilliant technique, the best of anyone working then, and when I did the writing he was free to spend his time rendering a magnificent piece of art. There are writers who are capable of inspiring an artist, bringing things out of him that he might not have known were there. There has to be a kind of emotional welding between the two where trust takes place. That's why we worked so well together. But doing any comic strip second-hand is a problem. Except for the ownership of the concept, I felt "The Spirit" had ceased to be mine while I was away. But when I came back and took it over again, I felt I was really ready to *do* something with it.

HM: How do you feel today about getting so much mileage out of something you did thirty-five years ago?

WE: It serves me right! Well, it's hard not to answer immodestly.

HM: Go ahead, be immodest!

WE: Seriously? Okay. I'll tell you that I'm well aware that I am a singularly fortunate man to command any kind of following for a feature I put to bed so many years ago.

HM: How did the decision to put it to bed come about?

WE: After the war, I had started a company called American Visuals Corporation, which was devoted to the commercial and instructional application of comics. During the war, I had come to the realization that comics were a far more sophisticated teaching tool than I had ever thought before. I saw how they could be used for training and other special purposes by businesses. I put on a staff of salesmen and had them approach the big concerns. Our first customer was General Motors. Pretty soon American Visuals was going like gangbusters. It was at that point, around 1952, that my availability and devotion to "The Spirit" began to diminish.

HM: You felt there was nothing more to do with "The Spirit"?

WE: I felt there was a whole new world to conquer. "The Spirit" was nice and safe, but at that point there was nowhere to go with it. I wanted to leave while the show was still a success. Had I waited another year or two, I probably would have started getting cancellations. I had been relying more and more on assistants, and readers were noticing the changes of style. We just couldn't keep up the quality. I finally had to make a decision—the same kind of decision I made when I left Eisner and Iger.

HM: Whatever happened to the *Spirit* movie we kept hearing about?

WE: Oh, every five years or so someone comes in to take an option on doing it as a movie. The last one came very close. Bill Friedkin [*The Exorcist*] was very serious and gave it a good try. He bought scripts from three writers, Harlan Ellison, Pete Hamill, and Jules Feiffer, before he finally just threw his hands up.

"During the war, I had come to the realization that comics were a far more sophisticated teaching tool than I had ever thought."

"Bill Friedkin bought scripts from Harlan Ellison, Pete Hamill, and Jules Feiffer before he finally just threw his hands up."

HM: I would have thought Jules Feiffer.

WE: I would have thought so, too. And add Will Eisner to that list. We just couldn't give Friedkin what he wanted. But now it's really being done, by Gary Kurtz, *Star Wars* producer, as a full-length, animated film.

HM: Have you worked closely on this version?

WE: I've been involved in many of the story conferences—it's based partly on some of my old stories—and I've made model sheets. I have veto power over the art prior to the beginning of principal photography. A lot of the pre-production work is completed, although we don't know yet who the distributor will be.

HM: That's good news. Still, I've always dreamt of a live-action, black-and-white version that looked like a 1948 movie.

WE: Maybe someday.

HM: Your work on "The Spirit" involves all the aspects of directing a film. A lot of artists aren't able to do that, to impose their vision.

WE: Some do. But many comic book artists are really illustrators. An illustration is a moment in time, selected and carefully rendered to reinforce the text. A visual, a good visual, is complete without any words. Comics, I believe, should be a *series* of visuals.

HM: The "camera angles" you choose for your compositions provide the point of view and mood that you're trying to establish.

WE: The "camera angle" is not selected casually. It's chosen *because* of something. Cinema is really nothing but comics put into motion. I learned about lighting from the theater. During my high school days, I became seriously interested in stagecraft. As a matter of fact, once I was a set designer for a high school show that Adolph Green put on. To this day, I refer to the panel as a stage. But with comics, there's a certain innate visual sense that comes across, which really has nothing to do with film. Film, to the audience, is a transient thing: with a comic, the audience can look at what's happening for as long as they desire.

"A visual is complete without any words. Comics, I believe, should be a *series* of visuals."

"Cinema is really nothing but comics put into motion."

HM: How did the resurgence of interest in "The Spirit" during the sixties happen? I don't recall that sort of grassroots movement ever happening, before or since, for a comic book character.

WE: In 1966 Leon Harvey, the publisher of Harvey Comics, called me. He had the idea that there was a superhero revival, and he wanted to reprint "The Spirit." I think he misread the market—it was the Stan Lee-type of superhero stuff that was hot then. Anyway, we put out two issues, then gave it up. But a few years later I ran into Denis Kitchen at a comics convention in New York, and Denis said he'd like to try a reprint. I said, "Sure, go ahead." To my amazement they sold enormously well. A bit after that, I was talking to Jim Warren at some convention in Canada where I'd been asked to speak, and he expressed an interest in publishing a "Spirit" book. Around this time, Stan Lee had also indicated some interest, but I made the decision to let Warren do it because he was very serious about it, and I felt he would do it with soul. And he did. Eventually he had to give it up because of the distribution and returns problems he was having, but now with Denis doing the magazine, I think we've got those problems licked.

HM: Doing *A Contract With God* was quite a gamble, since no market for graphic novels had been established at the time.

WE: I suppose the decision started with my teaching at the School of Visual Arts. In the process of teaching, you get to test your own concepts; you look at the professional world with a different perception. I began to discover that there were some things to do that hadn't yet been done in the world of comics.

I wanted to do something that I had just been talking about for a long, long time: I wanted to take sequential art another step forward by doing a graphic novel. I had no economic hope, no publisher, but I sat down and did *A Contract With God*. You reach a point in your life when you say, "If I don't do it now, I ain't ever going to do it."

HM: It's a very personal book; it must have been very hard to put all that on paper.

WE: It was. "To stand," as we used to say in the army, "naked on the drill field." When you do adventure stories, you can hide behind the hero's costume, and say, "This isn't *me*, folks!" I became terribly embarrassed while doing *Contract*. I had trouble rereading what I had written. Being honest is like being pregnant—there's no such thing as being "a little bit" honest. Once you start, there's no turning back.

HM: It received, deservedly, very good reviews. Were you satisfied with it?

WE: It was my first effort at a serious work, and I realized later that I could have turned what I was attempting up a notch—gone a bit further. Maybe unconsciously I had held back a little. So with *Life on Another Planet* I tried to carry the experiment to the next level, to merge sequential art and the classic novel.

HM: This is the serial that you ran in the

Spirit magazine recently?

WE: Yes. This fall it is being published as a full-color hardcover both in the U. S. and in Europe: it will be released as *Signal from Space* in France. Andre Le Blanc, one of my assistants from the old days, rendered the color. I revised the first three chapters from the magazine for the book version. It has a subject that hasn't been dealt with before in comics, and it's presented much like a "straight" novel.

HM: Is another graphic novel on the drawing board?

WE: Next year Lyle Stuart will be publishing *The Big City*, which is a portrait of New York from a worm's-eye view. It's a series of vignettes of life in the city as experienced by the people who've always lived there. I look at the fire hydrants, the stoops, the street noise—*Metal Hurlant* has published the "Street Music" chapter with a record that is meant to be played as you read the story.

HM: Will *Big City* be in black and white?

WE: Yes. I'm hoping that this will be the book that gets me into the "establishment" bookstores. *Contract* got shuttled all over the place: they didn't know whether to put it in "Religion," in "Humor," or some other section of the store.

HM: And then?

WE: I'm looking towards sort of a sequel to *Contract*, set in 1934. There are a lot more stories about that tenement on 55 Dropsie Avenue that need to be told.

HM: The *Spirit* magazine will itself be seeing some major changes soon, from what I understand.

WE: True. Denis is splitting it into two separate magazines. One will be called *The Spirit*—the numbering will begin again at one—and will be full-color comic-book size, printed on Baxter paper. This will run my post-war *Spirit* stories in chronological order, four to an issue. The full-color, gray tones and flat color we're using will take the quality another light year forward. Mike Newhall will be coloring this book, which will be bimonthly.

The other magazine will "humbly" be titled *Will Eisner's Quarterly*. It will be in black and white except for a color insert of a full pre-war *Spirit* section—including *Mr. Mystic* and *Lady Luck*—in sequence from 1940 onwards. Denis wants this magazine to be the platform for launching my new projects, and running things like "Shop Talk." [Eisner's interviews with other artists.] As it was, the magazine just couldn't contain all the elements we had going. The opportunity to run the "Spirit" stories in order, the way they were meant to be read, and to have a creative outlet for new work, was too good to pass up.

HM: Listening to you detail all your plans, I have a hard time remembering that I'm talking to a "relic" from the 1930s.

WE: Well, hang on, because I'm just now reaching my stride.

Editor's note: This interview, conducted by Ted White (former Editor of Heavy Metal*) and Mitch Berger, took place in the* HM *offices. It was later updated and revised by Mike Barson.*

Spirit in the Flesh

The Art of Will Eisner (Kitchen Sink, $10.95 softcover, $18.95 hardcover) covers early works from Centaur, Fiction House, and Quality Comics. Features include obscure material (wartime Joe Dope posters and strips); independent projects such as Nubbin and John Law; unpublished work including some wonderful pencil roughs of the Warren "Spirit" covers; a color and a black and white "Spirit" story; and best of all, photos of Eisner and his cohorts from the forties. The definitive intro to the breadth and inventiveness of Eisner.

The Daily Spirit, by Ken Pierce (I, $3.95; II, III, IV, $5.95 each). Since Eisner worked on only the first six weeks or so of the daily newspaper strip, his successors, Lou Fine and Jack Cole (*Plastic Man*) had their work cut out for them. But Fine and Cole's work is a delight, particularly Cole's (III). Eisner's inventive layouts had to be repressed in this format, but the book is generally whimsical and fun.

John Law: Detective (Eclipse, $1.50) is a full-color collection of the only John Law stories Eisner completed as samples for a possible Sunday newspaper insert in 1948. Cat Yronwode "discovered" this lost work while cataloging Eisner's papers. The quality package, printed on heavy-stock paper, includes notes, sketches, revisions, and other fascinating insights into the creative process of the artist as entrepreneur.

The Outer Space Spirit (Kitchen Sink, $8.95 soft, $15.95 hard) chronicles the 1952 collaborations between Eisner and Wally Wood (then at the peak of his EC science-fiction stardom) and marks the swan song of the original Sunday section. Wood's artwork is a joy, although the very idea of the Spirit in outer space still seems a bit contrived. Copious notes by that Yronwode person accompany the eleven black and white stories that saw print, and three others (by Jules Feiffer) in layout and/or script stage provide the final word.

Spirit Color Albums I, II, III (Kitchen Sink, I, $11.95, II, III, $13.95 each). These hardcover, full-color collections demonstrate what everyone already knew: "The Spirit" looks even better in color. Book II contains the great "Lurid Love" parody, while III concentrates on the Spirit's great female foes. Although the color in the first volume seems a bit duller than the subsequent books, each contains thirteen adventures, and are well worth the price. Pretty stuff—but how come no dates on the stories?

Will Eisner Color Treasury (Kitchen Sink, $13.95, hardcover) is not as enjoyable as *The Art of* , but is a valuable collection of Eisner's Warren-period paintings nonetheless. It also includes many Kitchen Sink magazine wraparounds; the Spirit and City portfolios; penciled roughs; and two complete stories.

Will Eisner's Spirit magazine (Kitchen Sink, $2.95, #17, #41). Forty-one was the last issue in standard magazine format: the magazine will soon be splitting into two separate zines. There will be a full-color comic book on quality paper (Baxter paper), which will concentrate on the post-war stories, and a magazine focused on Eisner's new projects, interviews, and pre-war stories. Back issues are available and are worth getting.

If no comic shop lies within reach, these items can be obtained by writing: Kitchen Sink, PO Box 7, Princeton, Wisconsin 54968; Ken Pierce, Box 332, Park Forest, Illinois 60466; and Eclipse Enterprises, 81 Delaware Street, Staten Island, NY 10304.

Mike Barson

COMIC BOOK SECTION

HEAVY METAL PRESENTS

ACTION Mystery ADVENTURE

© WILL EISNER

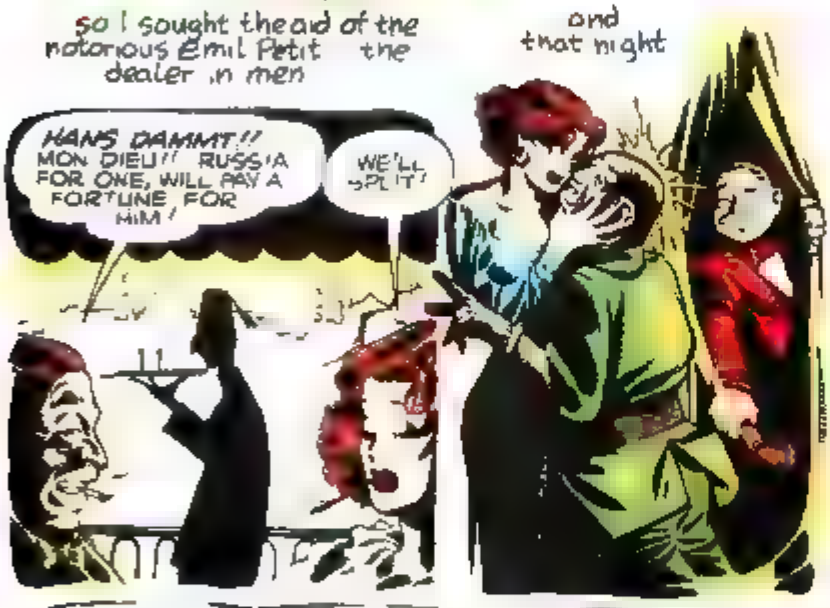
As you know, Turkey steered a neutral course until almost the end of the war, when she broke off with the tottering Reich. At once every spy and counterspy enjoying sanctuary in Istanbul was caught floundering like a fish on the beach. Yes, there I was too, suddenly in a hostile country and my husband none other than Hans Dammt, top Nazi in the area.

any fool could see.

he had to be done away with

so I sought the aid of the notorious Emil Petit the dealer in men

and that night



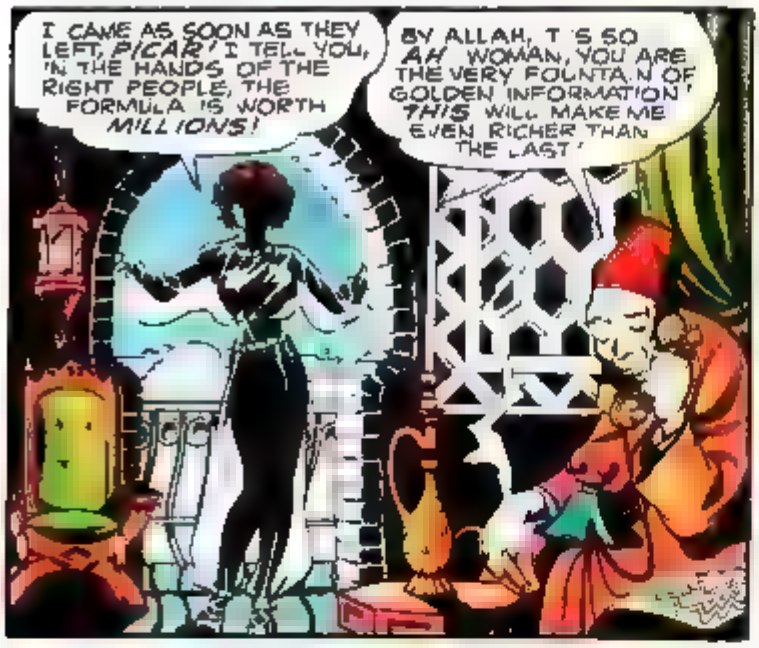
HANS DAMMT EASILY WORTH A MILLION KRONER MY GOVERNMENT IS MOST GRATEFUL, EMIL!
YES, YES TAKE IT AWAY, PICAR' YOU KNOW THE SIGHT OF A CORPSE DISTRESSES P'GELL'

500 THOUSAND FOR YOU AND THE SAME FOR ME AHHH WE'RE RICH!
TOGETHER WE'D BE RICHER! SUCH A SHAME TO SPLIT THE MILLION WHY DON'T WE AHH KEEP IT IN THE FAMILY?

Thus we were married and on our honeymoon, softened by the moon and ahem romance, Emil shared with me his great secret.

Five days later The SPIRIT stepped into my room.
YOU SURE WASTED NO TIME, P'GELL! YOU CONTACTED ME TWENTY-FOUR HOURS AFTER YOU LEARNED THE SECRET! HOW'D YOU EVER GET EMIL TO TELL YOU?
OH, YAAWwwn...EASY MEN ARE SUCH SENTIMENTALISTS AT TIMES! HOW MUCH IS IT WORTH TO YOU?
THE KALKOV FORMULA OF PROLONGED LIFE BELONGS TO THE WORLD TO HUMANITY! NEITHER YOU NOR ANYONE ELSE HAS THE RIGHT TO TRADE ON IT! I WILL TAKE IT TO AMERICA WHERE IT WILL BE PUBLISHED FOR THE USE OF ALL!
YOU FOOL! YOU IDEALISTIC FOOL!!
I DIDN'T SEND FOR YOU BECAUSE OF THE MONEY INVOLVED I WANT TO GO TO AMERICA: TO GET OUT OF EUROPE! I WILL TRADE THE FORMULA FOR IMMUNITY! THERE'S AN OLD SWINDLING CHARGE ON ME IN CENTRAL CITY
AMERICAN LAW DOES NOT PLAY THAT WAY, P'GELL!
BUT THEY'LL MAKE A DEAL WITH THE SPIRIT AND TO MAKE IT MORE ATTRACTIVE TO YOU, I'LL ADD TO THE BARGAIN, ME P'GELL!!
HARDLY AN ADDITION, M'LOVE!
EMIL!! BUT YOU WERE OUT OF TOWN.
NO! WORKING IN MY SECRET LABORATORY! BEHOLD, SPIRIT THE LIFE-SUSTAINING LIQUID DEVELOPED BY SERGE KALKOV IN 1640! I WAS HIS APPRENTICE THEN I KILLED HIM AND KEPT IT FOR MYSELF UNFORTUNATELY, THE NEWS OF HIS DISCOVERY LEAKED OUT BUT ONLY I HAD THE LIQUID, NOW IT IS ALL GONE AND I AM 300 YEARS OLD! PERHAPS BEFORE I DIE I CAN ATONE FOR MY SIN BY GOING BACK WITH YOU, SPIRIT, AND GIVE IT TO AMERICAN SCIENTISTS!
FINE AND I'LL SEE THAT YOU GET BACK SAFELY, EMIL!
31

- So, leaving me behind, Emil and the SPIRIT headed for the railroad -and America...


I CAME AS SOON AS THEY LEFT, PICAR! I TELL YOU, IN THE HANDS OF THE RIGHT PEOPLE, THE FORMULA IS WORTH MILLIONS!
BY ALLAH, T'S SO AH WOMAN, YOU ARE THE VERY FOUNTAIN OF GOLDEN INFORMATION! THIS WILL MAKE ME EVEN RICHER THAN THE LAST!

P'GELL HAS SOLD US OUT TO PICAR! HERE I'M DONE FOR! I'LL WRITE IT FOR YOU THE FORMULA! YOU MUST GET IT TO YOUR AMERICAN SCIENTISTS THEY'LL KNOW HOW TO USE IT "COUGH"... HURRY!" LIFE EBBS FROM ME FAST!
HERE'S SOME PAPER, EMIL!

Meanwhile -
YOU STUPID FOOLS, YOU BLUNDERERS!!
BY MY BEARD, SIRE, THE MASKED ONE IS A TIGER!
HIS FISTS FLAIL WITH THE WRATH OF ALLAH
HMM THEY MUST BE NEAR THE CAFE ABU THEY'LL SEPARATE TO BE SURE! MOHAMMED, TAKE TEN MEN AND SEEK OUT THE MASKED ONE I WILL PURSUE EMIL FLY FLY!! ACCURSED
YOUR WISDOM IS THRICE BLESSED, O PICAR, WE GO
At the cafe
IF THEY'RE ALL SO STUPID, I'LL GET THROUGH! ONCE IN GREECE I'LL GET A PLANE!! THANKS, EMIL! YOU'VE ADVANCED SCIENCE 1,000 YEARS!
GOOD LUCK, AMERICAN!! COUGH! YOU'LL MAKE IT, I'M SURE!
Twenty minutes later
YOU CAN STOP PACING THE FLOOR, P'GELL! I'VE COME BACK TO DIE IN YOUR ARMS!
EMIL!!
YOU'RE LYING!! IT'S A PLOT A TRICK! WHAT IS IT? SPEAK!!

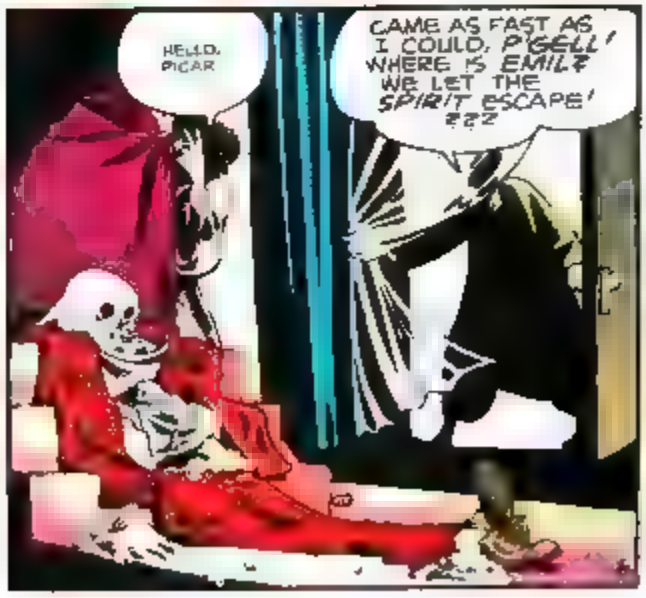
HELLO PICAR? IT IS P'GELL! EMIL HAS RETURNED NEVER MIND THE SPIRIT! I HAVE EMIL HERE!! YES YES I WILL SEE THAT HE DOES NOT LEAVE UNTIL YOU RETURN COME QUICKLY!!

AND NOW, MY BELOVED EMIL TALK BEFORE PICAR ARRIVES! TELL ME THE FORMULA PRIVATELY! WE WILL AHEM! CHEAT PICAR BY TELLING HIM A FALSE ONE! THEN YOU AND I CAN POCKET THE MONEY HE PAYS FOR IT AND AND

EMIL!! WHAT IS HAPPENING TO YOU? YOUR FACE IS SHRIVELING YOUR BODY IS SHRINKING!!

I'M GOING BLIND OR MAD!! THIS CANNOT BE SUCH THINGS DO NOT REALLY HAPPEN! EMIL YOU ARE CHANGING BEFORE MY EYES

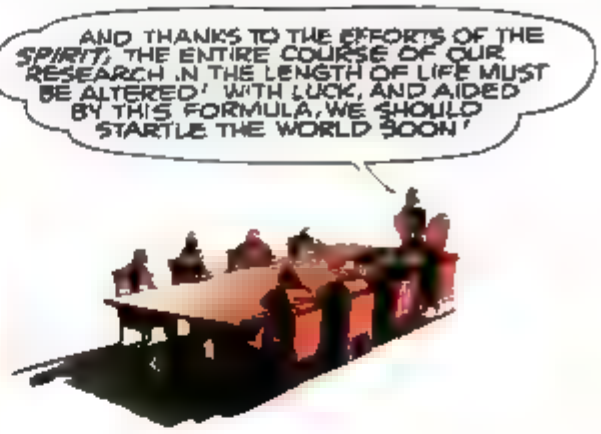
EEEK!


HELLO, PICAR
CAME AS FAST AS I COULD, P'GELL! WHERE IS EMIL? WE LET THE SPIRIT ESCAPE! ZZZ

WHAT?? ARE YOU TRYING TO MAKE ME, PICAR, BELIEVE SUCH A CHILD'S STORY? TURNED TO DUST INDEED!! COME, MY DEAR, YOU ARE FLIRTING WITH TORTURE AND DEATH!
BUT I'M TELLING YOU THE

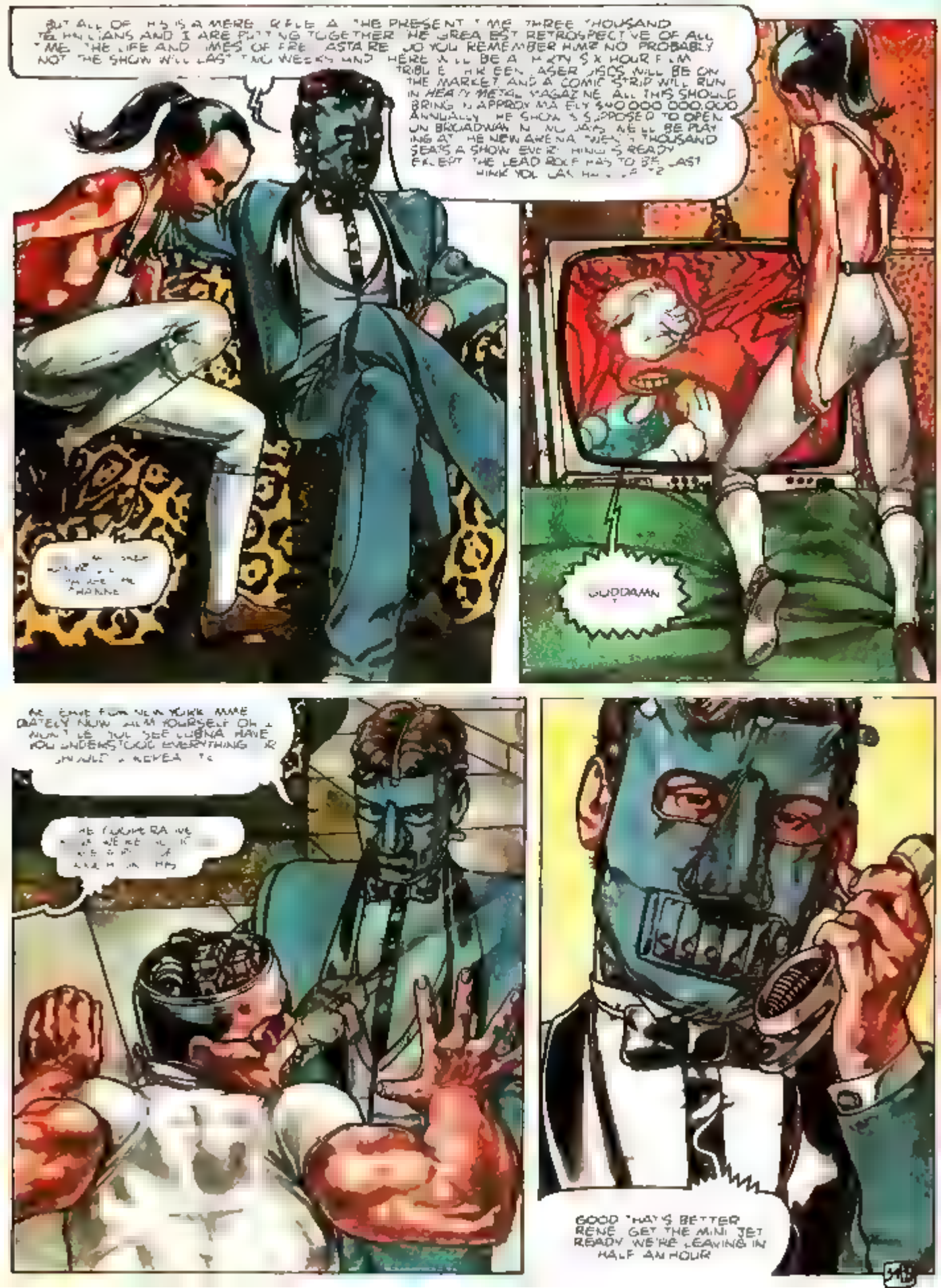
And so, as I stood there on the brink of death, the SPIRIT crossed the border and, aided by Greek friends, secured a plane headed for America

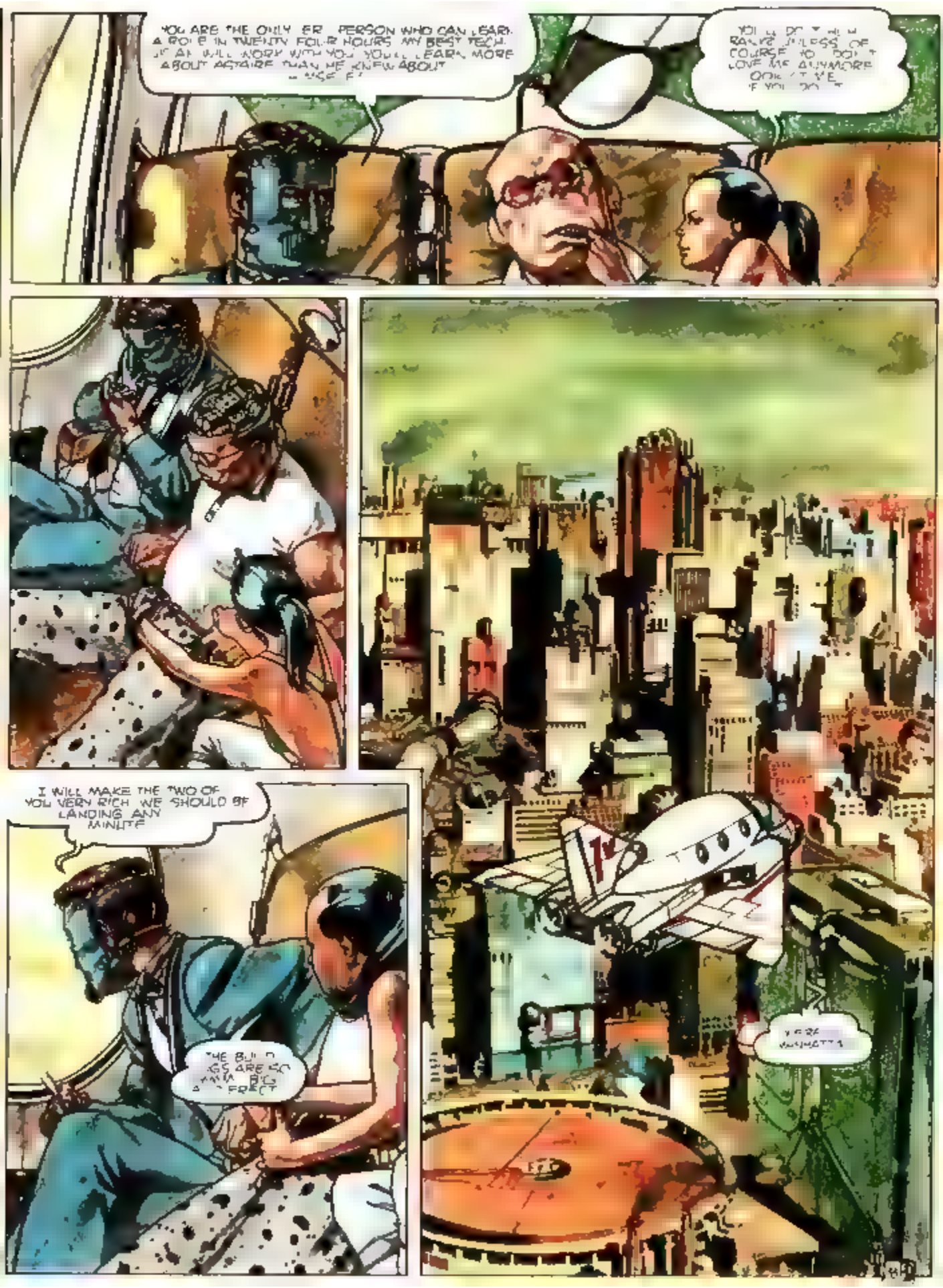
A month later, Professor Cordjac of Central City's medical research center was to announce in a closed session...


AND THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF THE SPIRIT, THE ENTIRE COURSE OF OUR RESEARCH IN THE LENGTH OF LIFE MUST BE ALTERED! WITH LUCK, AND AIDED BY THIS FORMULA, WE SHOULD STARTLE THE WORLD SOON!

And so, you can find me any afternoon in the cafés of Istanbul with my dear husband, Picar, sipping tea and keeping an eye open for a way to turn an honest piaster you see, what with a bribe here and a bad gamble there, our fortunes dwindled temporarily...

RANXEROX
AFTER DEALING WITH PSYCHO TRAVELERS AND A DRUNKEN BRAWL RANX HAS A LEAD ON WHERE LUBNA IS BEING HELD CAPTIVE THEN HE'S CAPTURED.
I WOULDVE LIKED TO HAVE MET YOU SOONER RANX BUT I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU HAVE BEEN KEEPING BUSY - KILLING PAINTERS AND THE LIKE ACTUALLY IT ALL WORKED OUT PERFECTLY NOW THAT RANIER IS DEAD HIS PAINTINGS ARE WORTH A FORTUNE AND I HAPPEN TO OWN QUITE A FEW PLEASE EXCUSE THE BULLETPROOF GLASS 'TIS MERELY A SIMPLE PRECAUTION AND I PROMISE YOU I HAVEN'T TOUCHED A HAIR ON YOUR SWEET LUBNA'S HEAD NOW LETS GET DOWN TO BUSINESS
THE SELLING OF DREAMS AND PHANTASMS HAS REACHED ALARMING PROPORTIONS BETWEEN TEN MILLION VIDEO AND RADIO STATIONS, THE CINEMA, NEWSPAPERS COMICS, MAGAZINES LASER DISCS CASSETTES, AND SUCH WE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY END UP WITH A MORTAL PROBLEM
RAAGH!
DON'T BE AN IMBECILE RANX LISTEN TO WHAT MR VOLARE IS TELLING YOU HE'S LOADED AND HE TALKS WELL
WE HAVE FILMED AND REFILMED RETROSPECTIVES OF THE YEARS '10, '20, '30, '40, '50, '60, '70, AND '80 AT LEAST THIRTY TIMES
33


BUT ALL OF THIS IS A MERE REFLECTION OF THE PRESENT TIME THREE THOUSAND TECHNICIANS AND I ARE PUTTING TOGETHER THE GREATEST RETROSPECTIVE OF ALL TIME "THE LIFE AND TIMES OF FREE ASTARE" DO YOU REMEMBER HIM? NO PROBABLY NOT THE SHOW WILL LAST TWO WEEKS AND HERE WILL BE A NINETY SIX HOUR FILM TRIBUTE NEVER SEEN BEFORE MUSIC WILL BE ON THE MARKET AND A COMIC STRIP WILL RUN IN HEAVY METAL MAGAZINE ALL THIS SHOULD BRING IN APPROXIMATELY $40,000,000,000 ANNUALLY WE SHOULD BE PROPOSED TO OPEN ON BROADWAY IN NOVEMBER WE'LL BE PLAYING AT THE NEW ARENA WITH A THOUSAND SEATS A SHOW EVERY NIGHT IS READY EXCEPT THE LEAD ROLE HAS TO BE CAST THINK YOU CAN HANDLE IT?
GUDDAMN
WE CAME FROM NEW YORK IMMEDIATELY NOW ALIM YOURSELF OH I WON'T BE TOO SEE WHENA HAVE YOU UNDERSTOOD EVERYTHING OR SHOULD I REPEAT IT
GOOD THAT'S BETTER RENE GET THE MINI JET READY WE'RE LEAVING IN HALF AN HOUR


YOU ARE THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN LEARN A ROLE IN TWENTY FOUR HOURS MY BEST TECH. IF AT WILL WORK WITH YOU YOU'LL LEARN MORE ABOUT ASTAIRE THAN HE KNEW ABOUT HIMSELF
I WILL MAKE THE TWO OF YOU VERY RICH WE SHOULD BE LANDING ANY MINUTE

WITHIN TWENTY MINUTES THE ARE AT THE THEATER
RENTED BY MISTER OLARE
Broadway THEATRE
HIS PROJECT COST BE THREE MILLION RACKS A DAY IN RENT AND THE TECHNICIANS SALARIES
MR JOLARE FINALLY WE CAN BEGIN WE'VE BEEN READY FOR THREE MONTHS NOW
I FOUNT BANKERO!
WELCOME
OM HE BE YOUR TEACHER YOUR MENTOR YOUR FRIEND
ONE MINUTE MISTER SHIT I WANT LUBNA WITH ME AT ALL TIMES
NO MY LOVE I AM GOING TO YOUR NEW YORK WITH MR JOLARE I DON'T WANT TO DISTRACT YOU I'LL COME AND GET YOU TOMORROW
IN TWENTY FOUR HOURS IN THE WHARF GOOD-BYE!

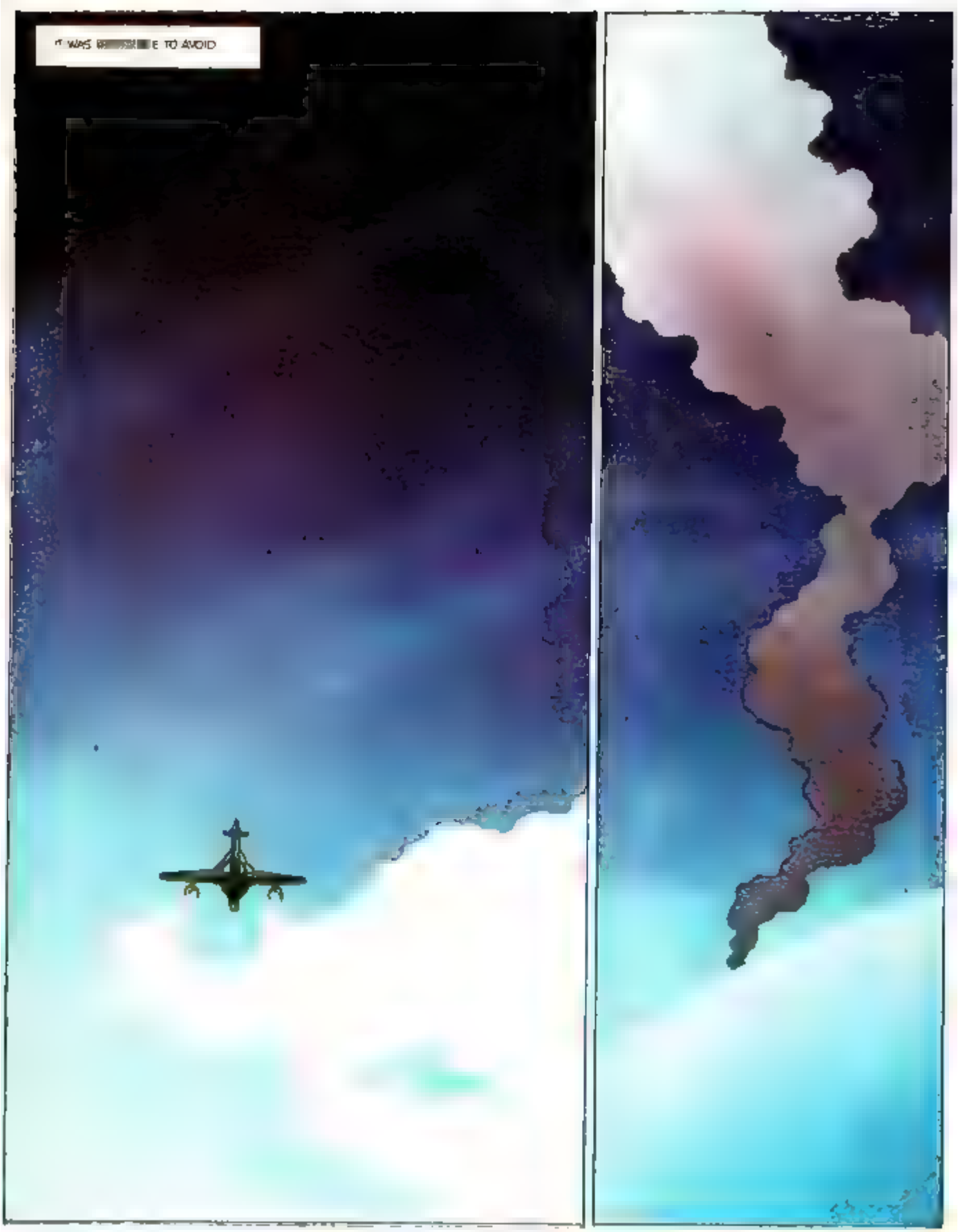
FOR THE NEXT TWENTY-FOUR HOURS RANX IS BOMBARDED WITH INFORMATION ON FRED ASTAIRE IF AN EASILY REPRODUCIBLE EARTH ASTAIRE DANCE STEP HAS SHIPPED WITH THE DISTINCTIVE ASTAIRE VOICE
HOW'S IT GOING?
WELL EXCEPT FOR HIS GORILLA FACE, HE'S THE SPITTING IMAGE OF FRED ASTAIRE!
OH THE STREETS OF A KUWAIAH AMERIKA DREAM
M5
OKAY RANX THAT'S A WRAP YOU WERE PERFECT WHY DON'T YOU TAKE A BREAK AND RELAX WITH LUBNA DON'T FORGET THE PREMIERE IS TOMORROW! DON'T BE LATE!
OH YEAH I HAD YOUR CRANIAL SKULLCAP REPAIRED IT'S IN YOUR DRESSING ROOM! HAVE FUN BUT BE CAREFUL THIS CITY IS A JUNGLE!

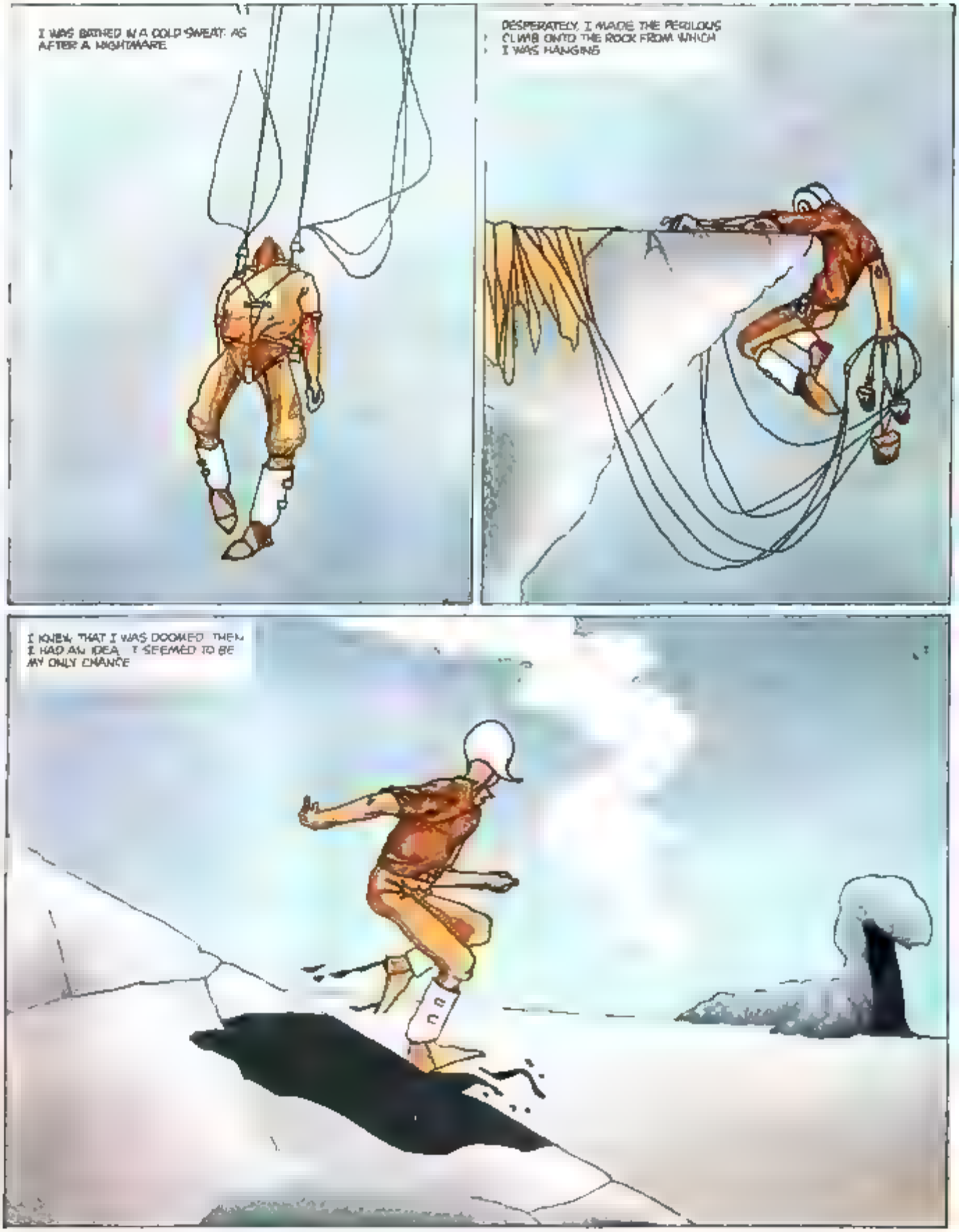
AS IN A DREAM

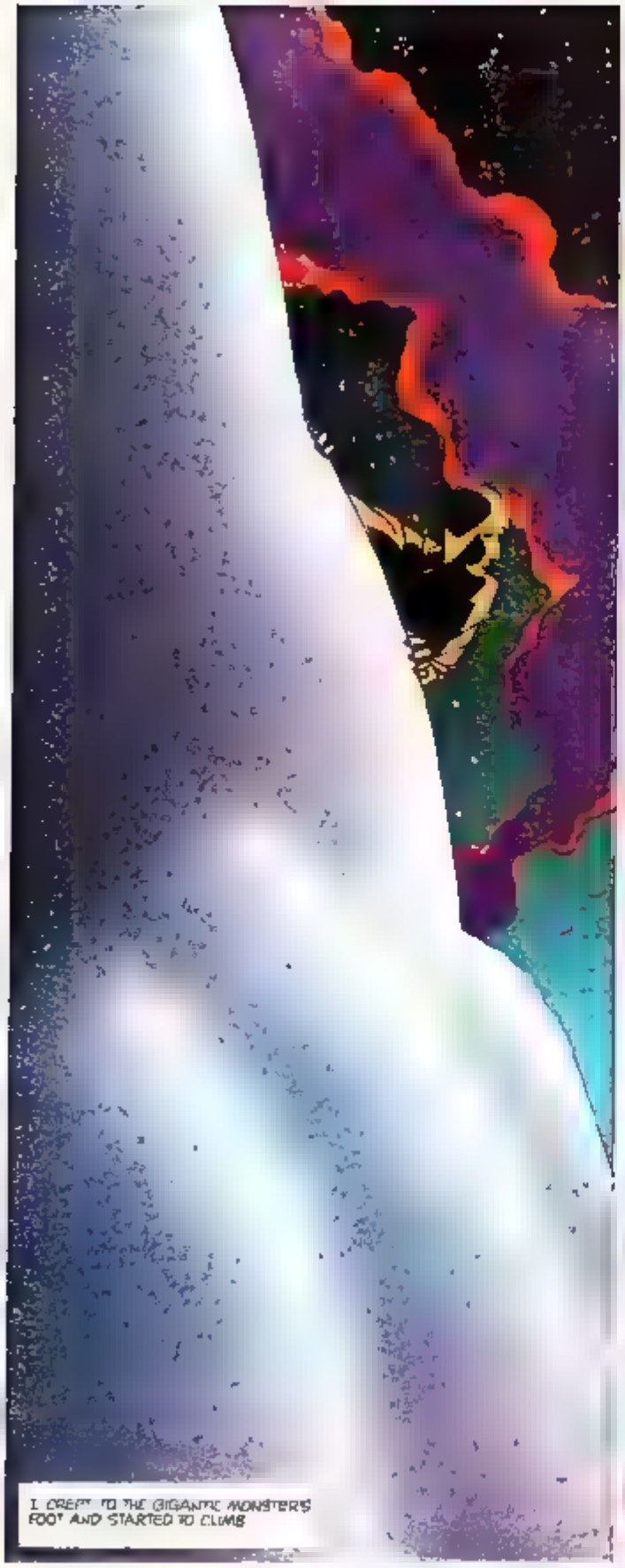
by Miltos Sotiras

THE MONSTERS THAT APPEARED ON EARTH ARE PARASITES FROM DEEP SPACE. THEY MOVE INSTINCTIVELY FROM PLANE TO PLANET IN AN UNENDING SEARC
THEY'VE MOVED TELEKINETICALLY AROUND THE
CONTAINING
THEY
WHEN THESE MONSTERS ARE FINISHED WITH EARTH, NOTHING WILL REMAIN. ALL VEGETATION WILL BE GONE FOREVER
CIVILIZATION WILL CRUMBLE AND MANKIND WILL STARVE. THE END WILL BE PATHETIC AND TERRIBLE

LOST IN THOUGHTS OF THIS HORRIBLE FUTURE I WAS RETURNING FROM A MISSION WHEN I FOUND MYSELF FACE TO FACE WITH ONE OF THE HIDEOUS THINGS


IT WAS [redacted] E TO AVOID


I WAS BATHED IN A COLD SWEAT AS AFTER A NIGHTMARE
DESPERATELY, I MADE THE PERILOUS CLIMB ONTO THE ROCK FROM WHICH I WAS HANGING
I KNEW THAT I WAS DOOMED THEN I HAD AN IDEA. IT SEEMED TO BE MY ONLY CHANCE


I CREPT TO THE GIGANTIC MONSTER'S FOOT AND STARTED TO CLIMB

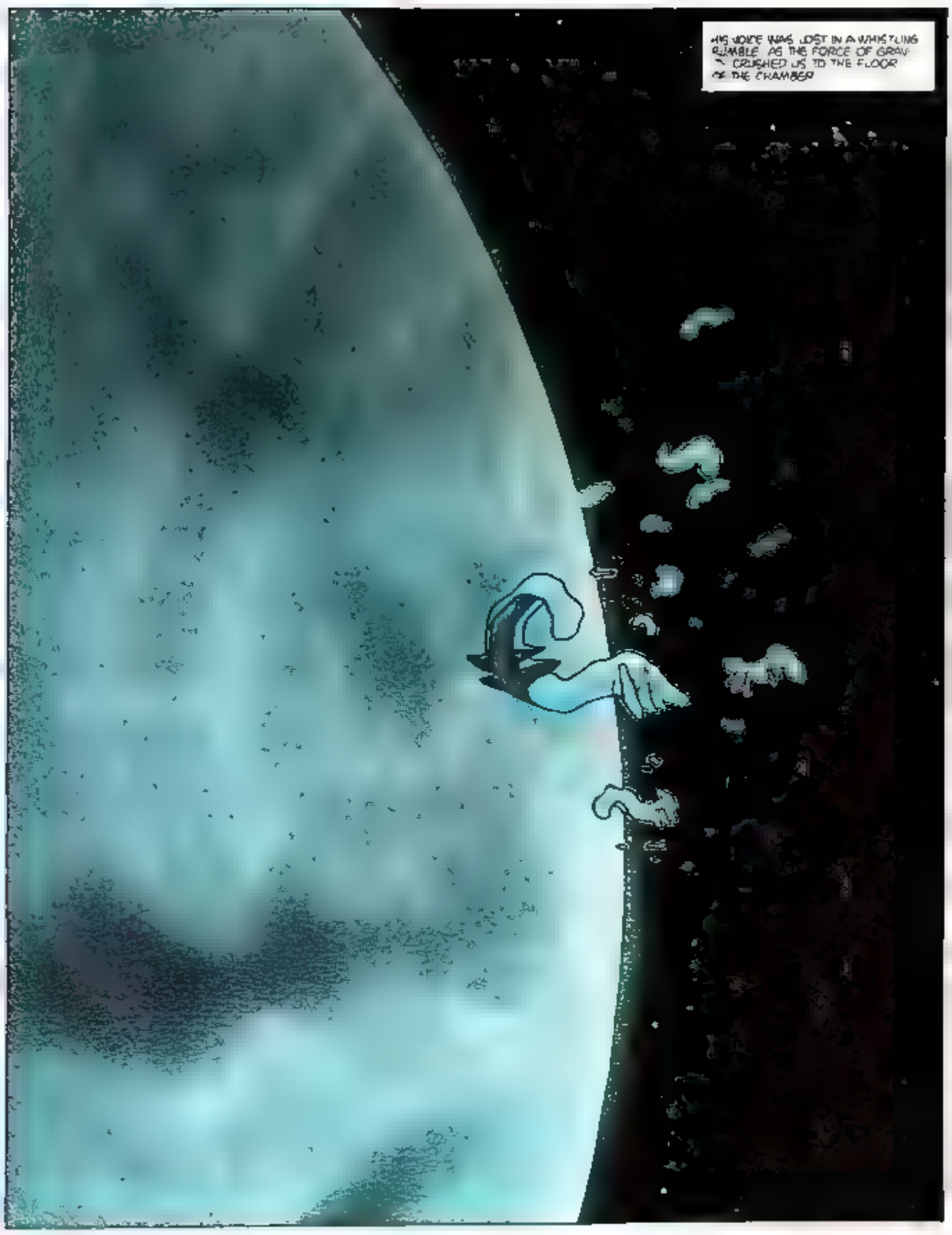
WHEN I REACHED THE TOP THE CREATURE'S SHOULDERS SPREAD OUT BEFORE ME LIKE A CHAIN OF SNOWY MOUNTAINS ON THE HORIZON

I LIT A FIRE CUT SEVERAL THICK PIECES FROM THE CREATURE'S HIDE AND COOKED MY DINNER SOON I WAS SO FAT

AT DAWN THE MONSTER CONTINUED ITS VORACIOUS MARCH. INSANELY, I GRABBED MY AXE AND STARTED HACKING AT THE HOLE I HAD MADE THE NIGHT BEFORE. IT WAS A FOOLISH AND FUTILE ATTEMPT TO HALT THE LUMBERING GIANT. COMPARED TO IT, I WAS LESS THAN AN INSECT.

BREATHING HEAVILY, I THREW DOWN THE AXE. AT THAT MOMENT, AN ENORMOUS CRACK OPENED IN THE MONSTER'S FLESH AND I FELL THROUGH IT INTO A STRANGE TWILIGHT WORLD POPULATED BY A FEW STOWAWAYS OF MY OWN RACE.

THE AIR WAS THICK AND HEAVY. BY THE DIM LIGHT IN THE CENTRAL CHAMBER THE TIRED SHAPES OF HUMAN FIGURES WERE BARELY DISCERNABLE
LEANING AGAINST AN OXYGEN TANK, A WEARY BIOLOGIST EXPLAINED THE SITUATION. "YOU ARRIVED JUST IN TIME," HE SAID. "WE'RE LEAVING ANY MOMENT NOW. THE RAPE OF EARTH IS OVER. SHE'S ALREADY STERILE AND THE MONSTERS ARE PREPARING TO LEAVE HER AND CONTINUE THEIR VOYAGE THROUGH INTERSTELLAR SPACE. CONDITIONS ON EARTH HAVE FORCED US TO LIVE WITHIN THE ONLY SOURCE OF NOURISHMENT REMAINING - THE MONSTERS THEMSELVES. AS AN ENDO-PARASITIC COLONY. WE"


HIS VOICE WAS LOST IN A WHISTLING RUMBLE AS THE FORCE OF GRAV- CRUSHED US TO THE FLOOR OF THE CHAMBER

NOW I WAS CERTAIN
THIS PARTING REMINDED ME
OF SOMETHING
PERHAPS MY GRANDFATHER'S GARDEN
THE END

THE GAMES—WHICH INTERESTED NO ONE—ARE OVER. THERE ARE TARGETS AT WHICH YOU HAVEN'T EVEN THOUGHT OF A MINE.
FORGET ABOUT GAMES, STRANGER! YOU HAVE KILLED THE MOST NOBLE MAN IN ALL THRCA AND THE VULTURES WILL FEED ON YOUR INTESTINES!
THE ODYSSEY
BY FRANCISCO NAVARRO AND JOSÉ SAURI

YOU BELIEVED THAT I'D NEVER RETURN TO MY HOME NOW YOUR DEATHS ARE AS FORETOLD
IF, IN TRUTH YOU ARE ODYSSEUS OF ITHACA, YOU ARE JUSTIFIED IN SAYING THIS BUT IT IS AMONG YOU WHO IS RESPONSIBLE. HE WANTED TO KILL YOUR SON AND REIGN OVER YOUR COUNTRY. PARDON THE OTHERS
NEVER
DON'T TRY TO RECOVER YOUR SPEAR GO LOOK FOR MORE WEAPONS

DON'T MOVE- I'M ARMED WITH ARROWS!
HE'LL KILL US ONE BY ONE IF WE DON'T DO SOMETHING
TOO LATE! EVEN THE GODS ARE ON HIS SIDE
WE HAVE SPEARS, SHIELDS, AND HELMETS. WE CAN SURROUND THE TEMPLES
I KNOW. WHERE THE WEAPONS ARE HID DEN I'LL BRING THEM TO YOU.
SOMEONE FROM THE PALACE HAS BETRAYED US
I AM TO BLAME. THE SPY WAS MORE IN-GENIOUS AND DISCOVERED ME!
THEY'LL STRIKE US DOWN!
NOT IF WE FIGHT MAN TO MAN! FORWARD!

IS IT SO REVISED
BE PLEASED, BUT DON'T CRY OUT OLD WOMAN. IT IS DISHONORABLE TO REJOICE AT THE SIGHT OF SO MANY LIFELESS MEN. TELL THE SERVANTS TO CLEAN THE PLACE THOROUGHLY WHILE WE MOVE THE DEAD MEN TO THE PATIO.
...LD A FIRE WITH SULPHUR O PURIFY THIS UNHEALTHY -R AND THEN TELL PEIJEL SHE THAT I'M COMING

ARE YOU CRAZY, NURSE? WHY DO YOU MOCK ME AND TELL ME LIES? EVEN THOUGH WHAT YOU SAY MIGHT BE TRUE, HOW COULD HE HAVE CONQUERED THE SUITORS ALONE?
I DIDN'T SEE. I DON'T KNOW. I ONLY HEARD THE CRIES OF THE DYING. BUT HURRY! ODYSSEUS IS SAFE AND SOUND IN YOUR HOUSE
IS YOUR HEART SO COLD THAT YOU WON'T WELCOME HIM?
I CAN NEITHER SPEAK NOR QUESTION NOR LOOK HIM IN THE EYES, IF YOU ARE MY HUSBAND WE WILL RECOGNIZE EACH OTHER BY SIGNALS THAT ARE SECRET TO ALL OTHERS
LEAVE US SO THAT YOUR MOTHER AND I MIGHT TALK. TELEMACHUS, WITH THIS FILTH ALL OVER ME, SHE DOUBTS MY IDENTITY. I SHALL BATHE AND ARRAY MYSELF IN MY FINEST TUNIC
BRING HIS BED TO HIS ROOM AND PREPARE FURS AND SPLENDID QUILTS FOR HIM

WHAT? WHO HAS MOVED MY BED FROM ITS PLACE?
I MADE MY ROOM OUT OF AN OLIVE TREE
WITH MY SWORD I TRIMMED THE TRUNK AND SHAPED THE BASE OF MY BED AND THEN DECORATED IT WITH SILVER, GOLD, AND IVORY
THIS IS MY MARK. NOW, I DON'T KNOW IF MY BED IS SAFE. WHO CAN BE TRUSTED NOW?
DON'T BE CROSS, ODYSSEUS. YOU HAVE GIVEN ME THE DEAREST SIGN THERE COULD BE. DESCRIBING THE BED ONLY YOU AND I

THE END

OOOH OOOH HE'S COMING BACK
HA HA HA! THAT'S A NICE BOY
YES, HE'S A VERY NICE BOY. VERY OBEDIENT.
LOLLA
SO FAR AFTER FAILING TO MAKE AN IMPORTANT RENDEZVOUS, OUR GRIM AND MYSTERIOUS HERO FOUND LOLLA A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN WHO DANCED ALL NIGHT WHILE HE WATCHED NOW HE IS BACK AT THE RENDEZVOUS SITE
SO, PRETTY HEART?
WILL SHE BE COMING TONIGHT, OR NOT?
ARE YOU BORED, MY SWEET? TIRED OF BEING ALONE?
OOH! AH!
KEEP MOVING! KEEP MOVING!

THE HOUR FOR RENDEZVOUS HAS PASSED
I KNOW. I KNOW.. I'M GOING.'
I'M GOING TO SEE LOLLA.'
WHICH WAY SHOULD I GO? I'VE BEEN GOING IN CIRCLES FOR THE PAST TWO DAYS.'
EXCUSE ME. DO YOU KNOW WHERE LOLLA LIVES?
LOLLA? OH, NO. WE DON'T KNOW. WE ARE A HAPPY COUPLE. WE DON'T TAKE NOTICE OF ANYONE BUT OURSELVES.'

I FORGOT THAT YOU CAN'T GET A DAMNED THING OUT OF THESE PEOPLE!
SHIT I HAVEN'T THE FOGGIEST IDEA WHERE I AM!
I MUST FIND LOLLA!
BANG
BANG
IT'S OPEN!

EXCUSE ME ..ER.. I WOULD LIKE TO SEE LOLLA DANCE

OOAAAHH HA! HA!
HAHAHAHAHA! HE WANTS TO SEE LOLLA DANCE! WHAT AN IMBECILE! HAHAHA!

EX UH EXCUSE ME
HA! HA! HA! HA!
ARE YOU FAVING ALREADY MY PRETTY?
COME DANCE WITH US INSTEAD
LEAVE ME ALONE I HAVE TO GO NOW!
VZJAN
DON'T YOU FIND US ATTRACTIVE?
HA! HA!
LEAVE ME ALONE!
HA! HA!

SHIT!

CLAG

HMMM SHE LOOKED AT YOU!
HA HA! MAYBE SHE'S BEEN WAITING FOR YOU! YOU'RE VERY LATE! DID YOU EVER MEET YOUR FRIEND? SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO COME LAST NIGHT RIGHT?
UH NO I'M SORRY I'M LATE I GOT LOST! I WENT INTO SOME HALL PEOPLE WERE DANCING IT WAS VERY STRANGE
I KNOW WHERE YOU MUST HAVE BEEN WELL... YOU JUST MADE IT I TOLD YOU! NOT TO BE LATE!

BUT WHO WERE THOSE PEOPLE?
MEN AND WOMEN WHO LIKE YOU, HAD A RENDEZVOUS.
MY GOD!
AH, YES, ONE DAY THEY TOO, WENT THROUGH THAT DOOR, A DOOR LIKE ANY OTHER AND SINCE THAT DAY, THEY'VE DONE NOTHING BUT DANCE. DANCE. DANCE. YES, YOU WERE VERY LUCKY.
LOLLA YOU SAID SHE LOOKED AT ME. DO YOU THINK THAT I COULD THAT SHE WOULD
YES, IF YOU DELIVER HER
DELIVER HER? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
DO YOU THINK SHE HAS ANY KIND OF LIFE? I MEAN DANCING EVERY NIGHT NAKED UNDER THE MOON?
BUT IT'S BEAUTIFUL!

YES, IT'S BEAUTIFUL BUT NOT FOR HER. IT'S HER WORK AND IT'S EXHAUSTING AND BESIDES NO ONE GIVES A DAMN
CLOSE THE WINDOW WILL YOU?
JUST BECAUSE IN ANY WELL-ORGANIZED SOCIETY YOU NEED A LITTLE POETRY THAT'S THE LAW
BUT WHY DOESN'T SHE DANCE ONLY WHEN SHE FEELS LIKE IT?
BUT IF NO ONE CARES WHY DOES SHE DO IT?
YOU SAW FOR YOURSELF SHE HAS NO CHOICE. SHE'S GUARDED!
I WOULDN'T CALL THAT BUFFOON IN THE UNIFORM A REAL THREAT!
DON'T BE FOOLISH! YOU WON'T GET ANYWHERE WITH VIOLENCE! LISTEN UP. IF YOU MISS YOUR RENDEZVOUS AGAIN THIS EVENING AND YOU MEET ME AT THE PROPER TIME AND DO EVERYTHING I TELL YOU, THEN I PROMISE YOU WILL LEAVE WITH LOLLA

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT ISSUE.

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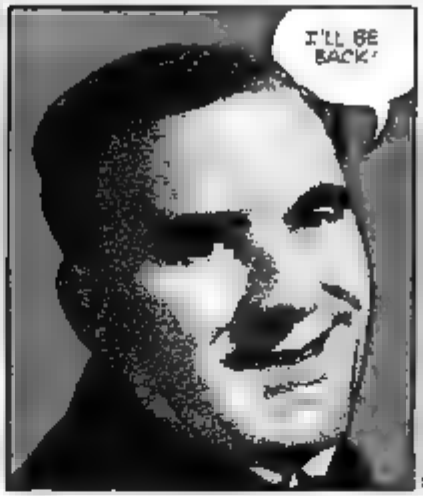
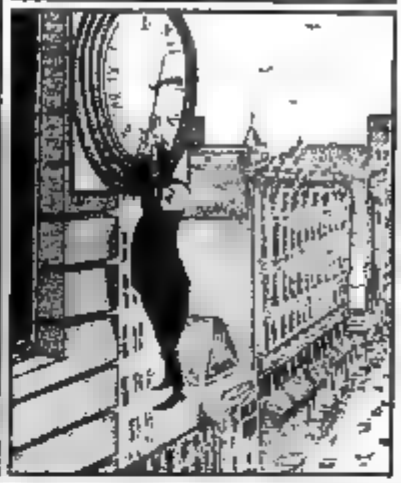
WILLIAM BENDIX SIGHTINGS

BEFORE BELOVED COMIC ACTOR WILLIAM BENDIX DIED IN 1964 HE MADE A STRANGE PREDICTION



1968 SURE ENOUGH, A SIGHTING BENDIX WAS REPORTED TO BE DANGLING FROM THE SITKA TOWER IN CHICAGO.

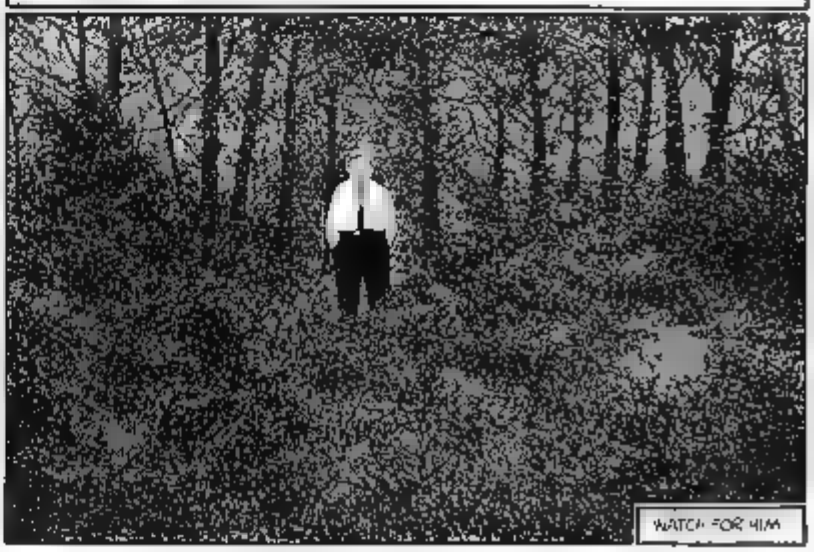


1969 BENDIX WAS NEXT SPOTTED HOVERING OUTSIDE A CHAMBERMAID'S APARTMENT IN ST LOUIS

1973 HE WAS SPOTTED DINING WITH STARLET SANDY DENNIS IN A POPULAR NEW YORK NIGHT SPOT

1978 DES MOINES MOTORISTS WERE STARTLED TO SEE BENDIX STANDING BY ROUTE 44

WHO CAN SAY WHERE BENDIX MIGHT TURN UP NEXT? PERHAPS IN YOUR OWN BACK YARD?? WOULDN'T THAT BE WONDERFUL?



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CHAIN MAIL

Dear *HM*

Lest we forget where we are, I'd like to remind everyone concerned with "What's Wrong with Comics?" (March) that this is the USA—land of free enterprise, run-it-up-the-flagpole, "Love Boat," and McDonald's burgers. Believe it or not, Reagan was elected President, and what's good for Marvel, DC is good for American comics. Get it? As in the movies, TV, radio, and the record *industry*, art has become intertwined with big business (and in some cases destroyed by it). Everyone knows this. So what's wrong with comics? Sample: superheroes, sf, and barbarians *sell* (just as nude women on the cover of *HM* boost sales, and without sales everyone involved (artists, businessmen, and readers alike) would go under without a whimper.

But wait! All is not grim. *(Whew! I had the razor blades ready for a moment there.—Is)* The insightful comments from the very creative comics people in the Dossier section all made sense, but unlike Lou Stathis, I'm not so pessimistic about comics' future. Aren't the recent creator's rights and royalties contracts, and the formation of competitive new companies such as Eclipse, Pacific, and First a giant step up to future quality and sophistication? *(Not necessarily. Check "The Comics Chopping Block" in this month's "Dossier."—Is)* Today I can buy ten monthly comics without a single superhero/sf/barbarian in its pages. Tomorrow? Even Marvel/DC are publishing more literate and innovative comics: *Swamp Thing, Arak, Aaron, Dreadstar Epic*. Somebody's buying it.

Then again, maybe art and business can never successfully mix, and all that the free enterprise system creates is mediocrity. If so, there'll always be *HM* (with plenty of nude women on the covers—as well as all the good stuff in between, of course).

Tim Karter
Fabulous Las Vegas, NV

Dear Eds:

I have one small thought about why comics are so vapid these days: they're just too damned *small*! When Jerry Weist reprinted half-a-dozen EC issues ten years ago, they had to shrink them to fit current size standards. The result was a trivialization of the originals that was far in excess of the relatively small reduction involved. I don't see how anyone draws *anything* significant for a Marvel-sized color comic these days. The problem is even worse in newspaper strips. In my youth, I read a NYC paper printed on bedsheet-sized pages that gave "Flash Gordon" and the intricately detailed "Prince Valiant" full pages. Whenever I see the old Prince reduced to a half page in a *tabloid* today, I wonder if poor old Hal Foster wouldn't have shot himself rather than waste all that time. The result has been the death of any interesting newspaper serials, with the main staple becoming one-punch joke strips. The artists have reduced their styles to a few swift, fat lines, and their dialogue to two-liners. They've *had* to in order to get any content into the narrow spaces they have to work in. Trudeau is one of the few people still working in subtle linework style, and he gets away with it by repeating the same block four times and writing blockbuster dialogue.

In the ECs, working in a larger format, and drawing on board that was four times the size of the final page, Woody and Jack Davis and George Evans could cram panels full of detail, while Alex Toth and Bernard Krigstein could put half a dozen tiny lines into a panel, because they knew the result would be big enough for their details or their compositions to register on the eye.

Larry Stark
Decorah, IA

Dear *HM*:

Loved the March and April issues! Lou Stathis's editorial on "What's Wrong with Comics" was very well done—I take back all the rotten things I've said about him in the past. *(Apology not accepted.—Is)* On the subject of comics at least, we're in total agreement. *(I'm reevaluating my position.—Is)* The spread of Robert Williams' art was great! I burned my eyes on it, it was so good. On the subject of T&A, not to be tiresome about it, but I like it, and people who write and say the magazine would be better off without it are full of shit. April's cover was one of the best ever, and I hope it sold you a lot of magazines. *(Actually, that one did quite miserably—our worst in a while. Who can figure it?—Is)* I'll continue to subscribe as long as you don't bore me.

Al Fanta
Boston, MA

Dear Editor:

I am not the type to write letters to magazines, but then again I'm not the type to normally read *HM*. I was introduced to your

magazine through my husband and am now far more avid a fan than he. I get a lot of kidding from my troops and quite a few raised eyebrows from my fellow officers (male and female) as this magazine is considered to be only for "druggies" and "weirdos" in the Army. I don't consider myself either and it certainly has far more intellectual value than what most of my contemporaries read (when they read at all).

The reason I was prompted to write was the article on the first page of your February issue ("Billy Likes Naked Girls"), where you semi-apologize for the preponderance of female nudity over male nudity. Although I have no objection to the former, I would certainly appreciate more of the latter. Since I understand the reasoning expressed—that there are far more male readers than female—I decided to let you know there was one more woman in the world who applauded your fine work. But please don't print my name, as I get enough hell every time the magazine comes to the company mailroom.

(name withheld because of threat of military intervention)
Somewhere Overseas

Dear Lou:

Loved "Cinderella" in the May issue. Finally, a non-sexist, non-sexual piece that is beautiful to look at and original in design—and by a woman to boot (Anne Kobayashi). I always read Kirchner's "The Bus" and "I'm Age" with pleasure. Always hate the covers because of the T&A.

Ellen Datlow
OMNI Magazine

(Oh yeah? And does your publisher, Bob Guccione, know about this peculiar aberration of yours?—ls)

HM

Aw, c'mon fellas. It's pretty evident, i.e. mag-rack sales, that people *like* sex-oriented art. A *lot*. I'm a card carrying member of that 5% female readership and *I* like sex-oriented art. What I don't like is bad art. *HM* seldom, if ever, contains bad art, therefore I like *HM*. Us lady sf fans appreciate you guys taking a sympathetic attitude, but frankly, who needs it? I guess that I view it as a bit patronizing when ya'll mount your white chargers and ride to our rescue. I'm a pretty capable person—I'm getting my Master's in Comp-Sci/Engineering, I run my own business, and I do all right. Sure, I've run up against quite a few problems with sexism, but I can tell you that those problems won't change one way or the other by de-boobing *HM*. So don't tell me from tits on the cover; tell me better about the evolution of sexist attitudes in the job marketplace. The only way those attitudes are gonna change is by women coming up hard-core competent, big tits or not. Right, Julie? *(Julie's off for her annual silicone check-up right now, so I'll just proxy her "You bet!" for her. —ls)* The main thing is: Do you like good sf, good stories, good art? If so, *HM* is a good source. Sexist, non-sexist, tits or no tits, who cares? I like what you're doing. *HM*, and I say brava and encore!

Lynne Yarbro Williams
Jemez Springs, NM

You have the *Return of the Jedi* drinking glasses!
You have the *Superman* jockstrap!
You have the *Tootsie* bra!
Now you can have the *National Lampoon's Vacation* T-shirt!

N[illegible]SHIRT COLLECTION WOULD[illegible]
[illegible]mplete without this one, adorned, as [illegible] with the movie logo and a pictu[illegible] the "Walley World" moose -two p[illegible]ious souvenirs of the summer's bigge[illegible]edy hit, *National Lampoon's Vacation*.
Comes in Byron "Whizzer" White, with [illegible]d letters in bright moose colors. Small, me[illegible]n, and large sizes.
If you liked the movie, you'll very possibly li[illegible]e shirt. Remember, no other shirt can s[illegible] National Lampoon's Vacation and I'm On [illegible] to Walley World."

Please send me_____ *National Lampoon's Vacation* shirts @ $5.95 each plus $1.00 for postage and handling.
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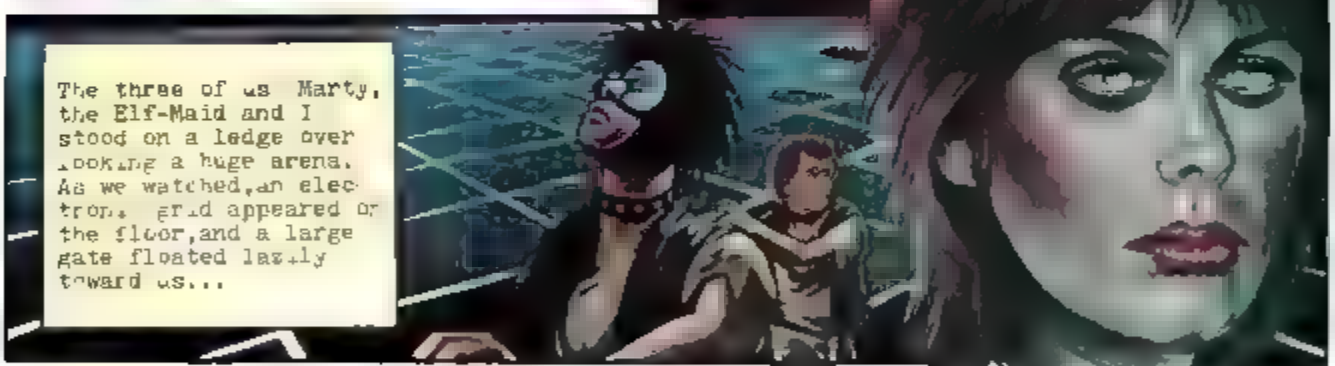
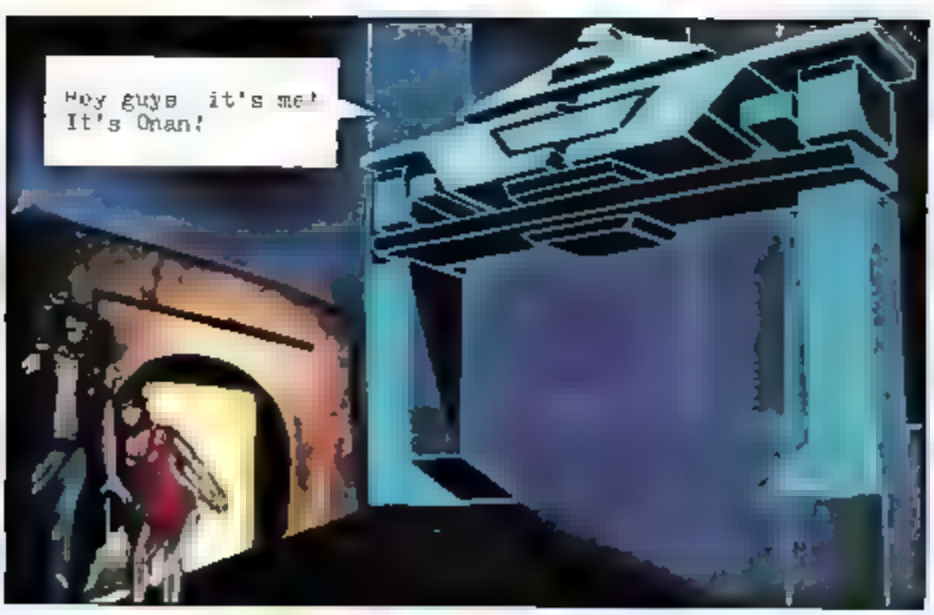

The three of us Marty, the Elf-Maid and I stood on a ledge over looking a huge arena. As we watched,an elec tronic grid appeared on the floor,and a large gate floated lazily toward us...


Hey guys it's me! It's Oman!

What are you doing up there?

I'm one of the Princess's cup bearers- I'm "Double D."
HARKEN TO ME WELL, CAITIFFS, AS I PROCLAIM THE RULES OF THY GAME!
Oh, alas--it's the cruelest of fates for a Faerie'
FOULNELL OF PHAGSBANE, AND THIS BE MY LADi
SHE IS THE PRIZE OF THY QUEST- THE PRINCESS BAZOOMA, SUPPORTED WERE BY HER RETAINERS!

Early in life,Marty's miserable parents had pressured him to learn a trade.They would have been shocked to discover how handy it was to be a comic stand-up sometimes...
...ey,your Majesty! What do you get if you screw an ostrich?
A stunned silence settled over the court
"Chirpies" and it's an untweetable disease!Get it?Untweetable?
--and Marty suddenly dissolved and reappeared atop the floating gate
POOF!
...HA!THIS FOLTROON DOES AMUSE US!COME,JOIN US, JESTER!
But the light-bulb was to really want change get it?
...K !

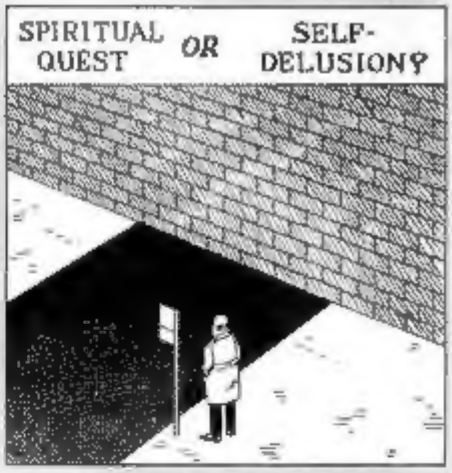
Hey, Marty--
come back!
Look out!There are knives coming out of the floor!
Well,don't just stand there--
do something!
I'm sorry,Pixelle. This is just so stupid it's hard to take it seriously.
Well you better,you asshole! Jump!
© 1983 Rod Kierkegaard, Jr.
She had a point--
I jumped...

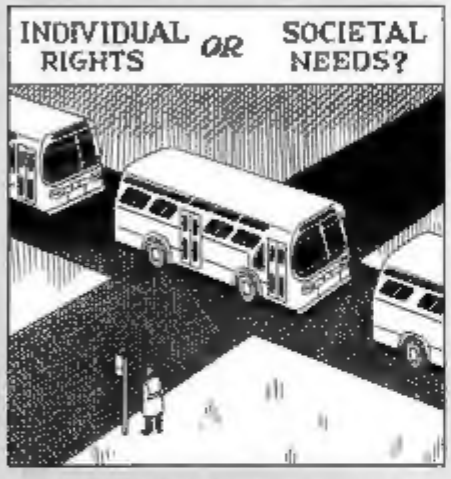
TO BE CONTINUED...

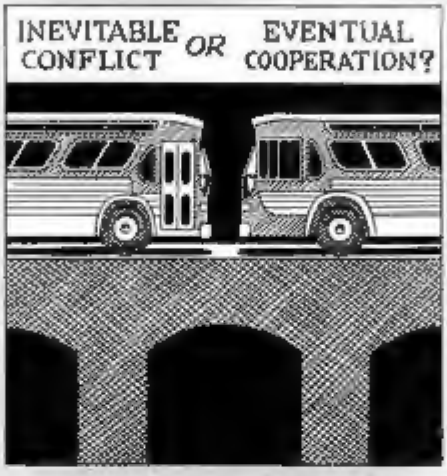
the bus

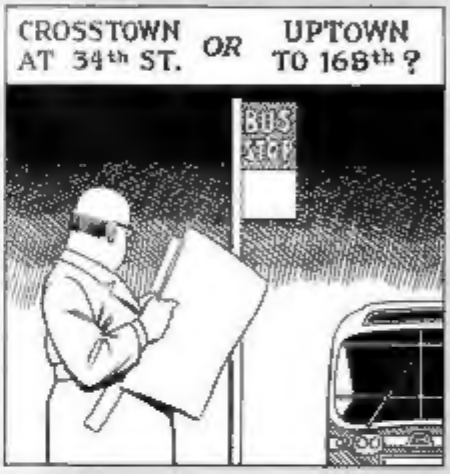
PAUL KIRCHNER ©

THE BIG QUESTIONS









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Interview with the maniacal artist who gave us RANXEROX—LIBERATORE!

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